

**THE THREE WEEKS' WAR
IN POLAND**

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A.E.

By

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CONTENTS

I. ON THE EVE	7
II. WAR	16
III. TO LUBLIN	25
IV. LUBLIN AND WARSAW	34
V. INTERLUDE IN VOLHYNIA	42
VI. HURRIED JOURNEY	49
VII. DIPLOMATS UNDER FIRE	62
VIII. SOUTH-EAST CORNER	78
IX. THE LAST CAPITAL OF POLAND	90
X. FINIS POLONIAE	98
XI. WAR AND DEFEAT	114
XII. INSIDE POLAND	128
XIII. OUTSIDE POLAND	147
XIV. CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR	166

NOTE ON PRONOUNCIATION

POLISH. l = English l; but ł = English w. o = o; but ó or u = oo as in *woolf*. w = English v; but at the end of a word w = f. c not followed by z = ts as in *hats*; cz = ch as in *church*. sz = English sh; dz = g as in *George*; rz = French rge as in *large*. ż = s as in *pleasure*; z with no spot, and not following c, d, s or z, = z; but at the end of a word it = tz.

EXAMPLES: Łuck = Wootsk; Lwów = L'voof; and Cracow is spelt Kraków.

The CZECH forms č, š, ř, ž, are approximately equivalent to Polish cz, sz rz, ž.

In ROUMANIAN, j = s in *pleasure*; i at the end of a word is not pronounced. c followed by a, o, u or a consonant = k; c followed by e or i = ch. t = t; but ț = ts. s = s; but ș = sh. ă is a queer sound, something like the German ö and something like the final a of the English word "Roumania."

EXAMPLES: Cluj = Klooz; Cernăuți = chair-nö-oots.



I

ON THE EVE

[August 26th-30th]

THE British Airways liner had been flying over Berlin for some minutes when the pilot banked, beginning his spiral down. Looking across the falling wing into the Tempelhof Airport, I felt as though my insides were dropping faster than the plane. For the concrete runways were full of 'Lufthansa' machines; the German airline had been discontinued some days. That big café, which one remembered so full always, showed bare tables now. The airfield was deserted. Only across and across its corners German fighters were ranked, nose to tail, like black insects from Wells' *Food of the Gods*.

Our machine straightened out and began dropping. Suddenly my mind went back to London. Tension there had been very great, with streams of evacuees leaving town, and it had been concentrated in the airport offices at Heston. Several times we had despaired of leaving, before permission was finally received. Later on, after crossing the Reich frontier, I had tried to see what was doing in Germany; but the country seemed desolate, little traffic on the roads or railways and small movement in the towns. Now here we were, grounded in Berlin. There were only three passengers, the others, like myself, journalists. I remembered that one of them, Bill Forrest, was not a safe person to be in Germany, considering his reports from the Republican lines in Spain.

Even I, until a month before, had been helping refugees out of Czechoslovakia; how would the Gestapo like that? I wondered.

The door was opened by a groundsman, with the expression of a prison-warder, who took us to the customs 'pen.' In the past one had ordered tea or coffee, but there was none of that now. After our bags, books and papers had been taken, we sat like three fowls on a perch, wondering whose neck would be wrung. The airport clerks glared at us through a window; every now and then an official would come and give us an extra scowl of his own. It made conversation difficult. All the British Airways people had left; but after a time one of the Tempelhof service men, more friendly than the rest, gave us the news. The Führer's expected pronouncement, timed for that morning (August 26th) was being put off hour by hour.

'Never mind,' he said drolly, 'even if they let you leave now, the war will begin before you reach the Polish frontier.'

After forty more minutes, the officials let us go. Our pilot was made to fly low, at less than three hundred metres, and on a course which they mapped out for him. In this way we saw what we were intended to see—nothing. We were the last British airplane over Germany. If war caught us there, should we be ordered down by wireless—to spend years interned? Or would our pilot dash for the frontier? If so, I wondered, whether we should get shot down; I speculated on our chances with a German fighter. We had smooth flying, but three Polish passengers from Berlin were sick with fear. Yet, in spite of our position, I felt relieved; during the Polish war I was often to be in a worse fix than I had been at the Tempelhof, but I doubt if I was ever to be more uneasy.

It was dark when we reached Warsaw—where we were

hardly expected to arrive at all. Unlike Berlin, the city seemed not changed since I left it a month earlier, with its well-lighted streets and music in the outdoor restaurants. But there were more journalists at the Hotel Europejski; and when we went on after dinner to the Bristol Bar, I saw a difference there. The Bristol, for all its poor music and bad cabaret, had always been crowded; but now it was jammed until five in the morning. You found there night-working journalists, ambassadors, high officers, gigolos, war-contractors, courtesans, spies, and neutral diplomats glad of their status but not wishing to miss the fun. The medley of figures, jostling, hugging, whispering, laughing, composed a scene as mixed and tumbled as a dream. It all built up an atmosphere which seemed to make for the release of every inhibition. Something of all this vanished after Poland's secret mobilisation began, for then spirits might no longer be sold. Warsaw could never be really gay without Vodka. Yet events provided their own intoxication; wild rumours circulated and there was vast boasting.

'There must be war; we cannot allow the Germans to remain in East Prussia.' 'The German motor-units will be useless in our fields.' 'We shall be in Breslau in a month, Berlin in three.'

Most people in Warsaw expected war every day. We English and American journalists did not hold this view; we anticipated a pause, after the German diplomatic triumph of the Russian Pact. The ultimate publication of the documents was to show that rumour had been right, after all. It now appears that Hitler intended to march on August 26th—the day of my halt at the Tempelhof.

Meanwhile, it was my business to get back to the Silesian frontier, to report events there for the *Daily Telegraph*. All

through that summer, Warsaw station had been in ruins—the Slav idea of rebuilding—and now it was further disorganised by a fire. None the less, I found a train for Katowice next day. Empty at first, the carriages filled up with soldiers and military nurses; three charming girls and their ‘officer,’ an older woman, got into my compartment, all bound for the industrial region. They carried bedding and equipment, and were proud of their badges and uniforms, with the childlike conceit of the Poles before the war. In Katowice I found the same naïve confidence.

‘It is the Germans who will suffer,’ said a high official of the Provincial Government. ‘Poland will regain her lost provinces.’ I mentioned the strength of the German armament. He replied: “It is overrated; and besides, the German people is divided. We are a united nation, determined to fight to the last man. You will see: we shall march to Berlin in three weeks.’ It seems odd that an intelligent man could have spoken so, but it was commonplace then. An official of the Education Department, after admitting that ‘Beck played too long with the Germans. I think we were mistaken in siding against Czechoslovakia to get the Teschen region for ourselves’; added, ‘never mind, we saved Teschen from the Germans, anyhow.’

For all this confidence, I found that my richer acquaintances had left for England, or moved to Central Poland for security. Employees of the big French and American mineral concerns had sent their families home long since; now many of the engineers themselves had gone on leave. Even a part of the Consular Corps had withdrawn from Silesia. Another official said to me, speaking of the Poles who had left so hurriedly:

‘You see, the German press is saying that those who came

in to exploit Silesia are leaving her again.' His lip curved: 'I must admit that there is some truth in that.'

Since all British correspondents had been expelled from Berlin some days before, I decided to have a look round in German Silesia. Katowice was too quiet for news. I crossed the frontier at Beuthen without trouble. (Though news of my crossing so upset the Polish Foreign Office that the British Embassy were required to vouch for me.) The German frontier town was nearly deserted. It was open to enfilading fire from Polish batteries, and the Germans evidently thought it prudent to evacuate civilians. Those who remained looked depressed and unhappy. I spoke to old acquaintances and found increased trust in Hitler, even among those who had been critical—but, linked with this, a refusal to believe in war.

'It won't come to that, *liebes Fräulein*, don't you worry. The Führer will get Germany her rights without war this time, just as he did before.'

They told me stories of the 'atrocities' committed by Poland against her German minority, and asked me if I had seen such things. I had not.

'Ah, you don't see them, but they happen every day. Why do you suppose our people come across the frontier to escape the Poles?' Then I learned an interesting thing. German 'refugees' from Poland were not being allowed into the Reich. They were being kept for use on the frontier. We were to hear much of them before the end of the war.

I found a noticeable shortage of supplies in Beuthen. There was no soap for foreigners, while even for Germans it was strictly rationed. Aspirin itself, the German product par excellence, was unobtainable. The chemist said that all stores had been sent inland. A friendly butcher showed

me the meat ration, the weekly allowance for a family with two children; it was enough for three meals, I reckoned, and your German is no vegetarian. The family's tea ration would have made a good 'mash' (as they say in the Midlands) for six English tea-drinkers; and the coffee, which tasted like burnt toast, and *was* burnt maize, could perhaps serve twelve. Oils and fats could be bought with a special permit only. Butter, cream and milk had been unobtainable for five weeks. I found it impossible to get meals in restaurants, and should have gone hungry, had not a waiter, well tipped in the past, produced a partridge from nowhere. What kind of victualling is this, I wondered, on which to begin a major war?

I drove along the fortified frontier road via Hindenburg, (which in the nineteen-twenties the townsfolk voted to call 'Leninburg') to Gleiwitz, which had become a military town. On the road were parties of motor-cycle despatch riders, bunched together and riding hard. As we came over the little ridge into the town, sixty-five of them burst past us, each about ten yards behind the other. From the road I could see bodies of troops, and at the roadside hundreds of tanks, armoured cars and field guns stood, or moved off toward the frontier. Here and there were screens of canvas or planking, concealing the big guns; they seemed not to be camouflaged against air-attack. I guessed that the German Command was preparing to strike to the north of Katowice and its fortified lines: the advance which was to reach Czeszochowa in two days of war.

In the middle of all this I bought odd things—wine, electric torches—and drove back peacefully. Now and then a trooper would spot the Union Jack on my car and give a sudden, astonished gape. As we reached a length of road

which lies parallel with the frontier, I looked across a hollow, some wire and tank-barricades, and watched the peasant-women moving about the Polish fields, a few hundred yards away. In the evening I returned to Poland, without trouble, the feverish preparations of the German military uppermost in my mind.

The frontiers were now closed, I found, to all not on special business. That meant five thousand Polish citizens with their jobs gone. Since rearmament and fortification had sucked up Germany's labour surplus, that number had gone over to work in the Reich daily; for there was heavy unemployment in the Polish industrial region. The Nazis had used their chance. The allegiance of the Silesian German is regional rather than national. He tends to be independent of Pole and Reich-German both. In Germany the visiting workman received special treatment, a job, and permission to take part of his wages to Poland, notwithstanding the currency regulations. His regional pride was flattered, and linked with the flattery was Nazi propaganda. In Poland, on the other hand, if he spoke the language most natural to him, it often cost him his job—if he had one. His schools and clubs were chicaned if they used German, and his bookshops raided. I had myself seen, in the Police-Chief's office, confiscated books, including a German translation of Trevelyan's *History of England*. The effect of Polish policy was the opposite of that intended; Nazi influence grew. The migrant workers read German newspapers, and evaded the Polish law, sending their children to schools in Germany. German Consulates and German 'cultural societies' intrigued with the middle-class Nazis of the Polish towns. The Polish 'Jungdeutschepartei' was openly irredentist; it demonstrated, drilled secretly—then

flew to the government for protection from the Polish patriotic societies. Now there was this mass of Nazified workers, dangerous in the army and more dangerous out of it. I resolved to talk over the problem with my old acquaintance the Silesian Police-Chief in the morning.

My intuition had not been misplaced. Though nothing had yet come into the newspapers, much had been going on. There had been a series of minor bomb explosions, always against property of the German minority and always ineffective. Then serious railway sabotage had been discovered. Following the shooting of a policeman the plot had come out.

'I have just come from the conference where we finally drew all the threads together,' the Chief of Police told me. 'You have seen the German press; each one of these ridiculous "outrages" has been played up as a massacre. Good. Meanwhile, a number of our minority were being trained in insurrection by the German S.S. in Breslau. Many have now returned here. At a signal, they were to begin street-fighting in Bielsko, in "self-defence" against our "oppression".'

'Why Bielsko?' I asked, thinking of the rather Austrian little town, centre of the textile district and of British interests in Western Poland.

'Because it is the densest centre of the German minority. The rest from Breslau, with others from German Upper Silesia, would have joined them. That would be Hitler's signal.'

'Signal for what?'

'For invasion. For "rescuing" the minority from "extinction" at our hands,' beamed the Colonel, 'but these Silesians are no plotters. That fool who shot one of my men told

everything he knew. We arrested the two student leaders of the plot, and they led us to Senator Wiesner of the Jung-deutschepartei, to Dr. Ulitz of the Kulturbund, and almost three hundred others. We have released some, against whom the charges weren't specific,' he added magnificently. 'But the climax came later. We arrested two saboteurs, Polish citizens who had fled, carrying false German passports issued at the Consulate here and crossing the frontier in *Consul Schaller's car*.'

This was sad news of the young Consul, a charming Saxon, cosmopolitan and unprussianised, with a delightful American wife. But it was much more serious than that. Alone of the Consular Corps, the Germans had treaty right to bring in cars without search. No doubt they had abused it before: the German Consulate-General was as big as the British Embassy in Warsaw, quite out of proportion to the size of Katowice, and I had long wondered why the Poles allowed its activities. But now this overtly hostile act showed me again that we stood on the edge of war.

II

WAR

[August 31st–September 2nd]

SLAM! Slam! . . . a noise like doors banging. I woke up. It could not be later than five in the morning. Next, the roar of airplanes and more doors banging. Running to the window I could pick out the 'planes, riding high, with the guns blowing smoke-rings below them. There was a long flash into the town park, another, another. Incendiary bombs? I wondered. As I opened my door I ran against the friends with whom I was staying, in their dressing-gowns.

'What is this all about?'

'We aren't sure. A big air-raid practice was announced for to-day. Or it may be something more. We are trying to reach Żoltaszek' (my old friend the Chief of Police). Just then the Polish maid appeared.

'Only Mrs. Żoltaszek is at home.'

'Then ask her what's going on. Is this an air-raid practice? What does she know?' they pressed the girl. She spoke into the telephone for a moment and then turned, her eyes wide open.

'She . . . she says it's the beginning of war! . . .'

I grabbed the telephone, reached the *Telegraph* correspondent in Warsaw and told him my news. I heard later that he rang straight through to the Polish Foreign Office, who had had no word of the attack. The *Telegraph* was not only the first paper to hear that Poland was at war—it had, too,

the odd privilege of informing the Polish Government itself.

I had arranged for a car to come on the first hint of alarm, but it did not arrive. We stood, drank coffee, walked about the rooms and waited; I was alternately cursing my driver and wondering whether the *Telegraph* would produce a Special Edition for my news. The war, as a tragic disaster, was not yet a reality. When my driver came at last, he met my fury with a pitying smile.

'It's only an air-raid practice,' he said.

We ran down to the British Consulate, which I knew well. On our way I noticed smiles on the faces turned up to the sky. 'Well,' they seemed to be saying 'so this is the air-raid practice.'

'But of course it's an air-raid practice, Herr Konsul,' the Secretary of the Consulate was saying as I arrived. My own reaction, for the moment, was actual fear: fear that I had made the *gaffe* of my life by reporting a non-existent war.

However, official confirmation of the war came soon enough. At once the Secretary—one of the German minority, who had worked at the Consulate since its opening in 1920—burst into tears.

'This is the end of poor Germany,' she wept.

Just then my sympathy with 'poor Germany' was not all that it might have been.

Everyone at the Consulate was working furiously. Papers were being stuffed into the big, old-fashioned stoves until ashes fluffed under one's feet. The Consul was whipping round by telephone to ensure the departure of those British subjects who remained. A much worse problem faced Miss M. L. Dougan, who had charge of refugees from Czechoslovakia. I had been doing this job until a month before, and I well knew how cruel it would be now. More than a

thousand souls remained of those who had escaped the Gestapo in Vienna, the Reich, Bohemia, Moravia and the Sudetenland. Thanks to inertia in England, they had waited in Poland for weeks, even months; and now the Nazis would be coming to claim them. All that day, Miss Dougan struggled with a transport system which had jammed. Walking parties of refugees set off eastward: I was to meet them in Volhynia, on the Roumanian frontier, even in Bucharest itself; but many fell into German hands. A train was started, full of women and children. Two days later I was to find it in Cracow; then it was to stop again in Kielce, until that town was bombed and its passengers scattered.

By ten a.m., as the raids were doing little harm and there was no sound of artillery, I decided to visit the frontier. From Katowice I motored in the general direction of Gleiwitz passing Polish troops on their way to the front. The suburbs and satellite villages round Katowice did not seem seriously alarmed. People stood outside their houses, looking slightly stunned, and gazing at the sky. There was no mad rush to leave the frontier zone. We drove past the emplacements of heavy artillery, where the men were unmasking and oiling the guns. A Captain whom I knew well greeted me and confided:

‘It’s a great pity, but the concrete of our gun emplacements hasn’t yet properly set.’

There was some shooting going on, but the atmosphere was far less tense and feverish than it had been in Germany before the war. I drove along the road to Przysowice and overlooked the German fortifications on the Gleiwitz front. No-one stopped the car. The factories we passed were not working and the dwellings round them had been evacuated. From Przysowice we drove down the frontier to Rynbik,

through an unperturbed countryside, and back along the frontier to Katowice. In some villages the markets were taking place as usual. In the ugly industrial town of Chorzow I saw gaily dressed children climbing into motor-buses, to be evacuated from the frontier-district. One might have felt that the day was a holiday, and the people waiting for some procession or spectacle. I went into several churches, rather expecting them to be full, but in all cases they were empty.

During my few hours out of Katowice conditions there had changed. The people had realised their tragic illusion and knew that war had begun. Air-raid wardens had swarmed out since the early morning, and their yellow arm-bands dotted every street. Impromptu ambulances were standing in the side-roads. All trains and buses had stopped and the telephone service was not functioning properly. There were few rich people left to go, but some cars still passed, laden with blankets and suitcases.

I had just returned to the Consulate when everyone ran to the windows. Thirty or forty young men, the oldest not above twenty, were marched by under double guard. All wore swastika arm-bands. Hearing the guns and alarm, they had assumed that the Germans forces were through. Their long-prepared badges on their arms, they had catapulted on to the streets, yelling 'Heil Hitler!' Instead of a popular rising, they had found troops to surround and disarm them. A few minutes after this, we heard two lorries crash by. They were full of workmen, their clothes ripped, smeared with blood and dirt. They were crouching in a ring of soldiers, and every time one raised a head, a rifle-butt drove it down again. These men had been involved in another Nazi revolt. When I drove to lunch I passed a court, behind a

new cinema where I had often seen French films; I saw out of the tail of my eye the improvised sheds, the figures with rifles up, and guessed those others against the wall. The volley sounded as my car took the hill beyond. Behind my shudder I was wondering: was the Colonel right about his clean-up of espionage?

Throughout the day the press and the authorities maintained that the Germans had been repulsed at all points. Katowice and its satellite-towns had not been attacked, or even bombed seriously. But the wildest rumours circulated. In the afternoon I began to get news through the Consulate. The Germans were said to be using 'Freicorps'—bands of those Silesian 'refugees' whom I had been told of in Beuthen. These had penetrated at many points. In the evening it was known that the Nazis were through at the two points I expected: from west of Gleiwitz towards Czestochowa; and through the Moravian Gate, that gap in the mountains which historically has been the avenue from the Czech into the Polish lands. Thinking of a night-attack or night-raiding, I decided to sleep in Cracow, seventy kilometres away, and to return in the morning.

I left at dark for Cracow. The road for miles was a jostle of peasant waggons; and the blue lights of my car brought out the humped figures, the carts overpiled, and everywhere the white discs of children's faces, with the vague radiance of a blue-period Picasso. I felt inhumane then, passing in my car, but I should have felt infinitely worse had I known what sad days awaited these folk. Beyond Sosnowiec we passed that point where the empires of Germany, Austria and Russia touched before 1914. In daylight you can see the architectural change: from ugly German solidity to the wood huts of the Russian village. What breaking and

remaking of Europe are we seeing the start of now? I wondered. Big crowds stood in the villages, running to their houses at the sirens' alarm. Sometimes we passed without knowing that a warning had been given, and wardens or townspeople rushed to stop us. The Polish theory was that cars should stand during an air-raid. It made driving difficult. One of the towns on our road, I knew, had a pure-Jewish population. The only gentiles were officials posted there. I was struck at once by the calmer atmosphere: it was Friday evening. Yet these people more than all, I thought, have cause for fear. In Cracow, when we reached it, the contrary was true: even the police were hysterical. I came out of my hotel again just in time; my chauffeur was being set on by a policeman who had his revolver half-drawn. We had parked wrongly, it seemed.

Cracow was barren of news, so I turned back for Katowice next day. There were controls in every town and village, and even with my pass from the Commander of the Southern Army it took some time to get through. Just outside Cracow the Poles had lately opened a grand new bridge, to avoid a dangerous level crossing. Near to it large numbers of men were digging away in the hard earth, making trenches for what I reckoned must be the second line of defence. There was no civilian traffic, other than the refugees in their carts; but there were plenty of army lorries, and I could see troop-trains drawn up in the open country, full of men and guns, without an attempt at camouflage. At one point I noticed large numbers of horses, camp-kitchens and tents being brought up, with fresh field-telephones by the roadside, all evidence of troop-concentrations in the low hills and woods.

Back in Katowice I found most of the shops closed, but one could still buy enough food for lunch. The atmosphere was fairly snapping now. I found the Consulate absorbed, partly in news-bulletins and partly in tracing an English-woman 'left behind.' Five times they telephoned to the factory with which she was connected, the Zakłady Elektro and five times the receiver was banged down at the other end. The sixth time a voice said:

'For God's sake let us be, we are on fire!'

This was the biggest electrical and carbide concern in Western Poland. I heard afterwards that a German airplane flew over it, without dropping anything, and that an explosion and fire followed. Some of the Colonel's friends *not* tidied away, no doubt. Meanwhile, the search for the young woman went on. Presently she was on the line.

'I'm sorry. I can't leave. You see, the Germans have already passed here, and I doubt if our special train for the factory personnel will run.'

'*The Germans* are there!'

'Yes, they didn't disturb us, and told us to carry on with our jobs. Then they went on.'

'But are you 'phoning from behind the German lines?'

'There aren't any lines. They went away.'

It seemed incredible, and the local authorities refused to believe it at first. But it was true. The big break-through came soon after eleven a.m. on that second day of the war. It was not known to the Silesian authorities until three in the afternoon. Sabotage of the telephone may have had its effect, for soon after midday it went out of use altogether.

I poked round Katowice and the district, trying to verify some of the many wild stories which were afloat. I found that the Radio Station had been hit, but was functioning

again. The Nazis had started a riot at Semianowice, which the Poles quelled with machine-gun fire. At Trzelinia the Germans bombed the railway station and terrified the people with incendiary bombs which set a good part of the town afire. A cordite factory only about eighteen kilometres from Katowice also made a big blaze on the skyline. In general, the Germans succeeded in panicking the population of the industrial towns. Over Katowice the German bombers circled threateningly, maintaining the state of nerves, but still doing small harm; obviously the Germans expected to occupy the town soon, and were unwilling to cause too much destruction there.

One enormous explosion, which startled us before lunch, was reported to be a train-load of ammunition hit by a bomb. I felt that the war, which had been slow to start, like a car on a cold morning, was now beginning to run.

The Poles had always boasted that, in case of invasion, their industry should never fall intact into German hands. In confidence, they had even justified their failure to make the necessary capital improvements in their industrial plant on the ground that they might be forced to destroy it. I was therefore surprised to see foremen and workmen leaving their work without an effort to sabotage the machinery or flood the mines. In one pit they even managed to prevent such measures by a sit-down strike. A French director of the Franco-Polish Zinc Company, who had returned to ensure the flooding of their property, was not allowed to take any action at all. So far as I could find out, only one industrialist was successful in disabling his equipment: M. Poklowski-Kosziel, whom I knew chiefly as a leading Anglophil, a former Attaché at the Polish Embassy in London and a friend of the Duke and Duchess of Kent. Other-

wise, the heavy industry of Silesia and the Dobrowa basin, as well as the textile industry of Bielsko and district, passed undamaged to the Nazis. In just the same way, it was well known that the Polish frontier had been mined—but those mines never exploded. Invasion is simplified when one has such good friends in the country invaded.

Soon after three on the same afternoon, the Provincial Government asked the British and French Consuls to leave, with the last of their nationals. I took a few possessions, knowing this for my last opportunity, and scrambled into the Consul's car. When we called on the French Consul, that charming man insisted on my taking a case of champagne for which he had no room in his car; it was to stand me in good stead later on. Before we left, we had to call back at our own Consulate. I had a sudden 'hunch': 'this is going to be bad, this will be a near thing,' as the alarms sounded for a raid. Just as we stopped by the Consulate, there was a roar overhead; an anti-aircraft machine-gun crackled on a roof above the car. The racket was tremendous. For the first time the German 'planes were diving and shooting into the streets. We were too fair a mark and ('neutrals' though we still were) we broke out and ran for the building. Then, so soon as the wave was past, we raced out of the town. All along stood the towns-people at their doorways, gas-masks clasped nervously against them, and scared eyes on the heavens. I thought: 'So this is to be the German tactic, the terrorising of civil populations, the machine-gunning of open towns without military objectives.' I could not know that not until long after our own entry into the war would Hitler announce his decision 'in future' to attack civilians.

III

JOURNEY TO LUBLIN

[September 3rd-4th]

THE BAROQUE architecture of Cracow became curiously weightless by moonlight. Its curving planes were reflected light, less substantial than the blocks of shadow. The buildings seemed almost continuous with the cold, flat sky. I had the impression of something at the same time near, and beyond the world: a dream or a set for *Don Giovanni*. Then abruptly a voice yelled: "Uwaga! Uwaga! Uwaga!" and the sirens screeched behind. It was a raid-warning.

This time the alarms went on through the night; there were rushes of feet in the corridors outside my room. At three a.m. the hotel porter came:

'Mademoiselle, you *must* come downstairs. There is an alarm. There have been several alarms.'

'I shall stay here.' My bed was easy, even if there was little sleeping, and each sinew cracked with tiredness.

'It is an order, Mademoiselle. The Police insist on guests leaving their rooms.'

I had seen enough of the Cracow police, so I dragged on a coat and followed. A crowd sat in the lounge off the foyer. The Poles had dressed carefully, but the English, true to the theory that foreigners are not quite people, sat in their dressing-gowns. The Polish wireless fired off its tiresome, incomprehensible warnings. There was nothing to do: half-read a travel-magazine, kick off one's slippers and put them on again, badger the porter (quite uselessly) for coffee;

all with an ear for the bump of explosions and the rattle of mirrors and windows afterwards. What a fallacy that frightened people are worth studying because in fear they show their true characters! But as I looked round these faces I thought that, after all, there might be little character to reveal. At last we bullied our ways back to bed. It was the last time I left my bed for an air-raid. The Poles sat on, precise, respectable, apprehensive.

Soon after dawn the sound of heavy artillery was plain, and it grew obvious that Cracow would not be secure for long. I took a car out on the Katowice road, but I could not get far; it had become part of the battlefield. This was the only part of my war which looked as war does in books and films and stories. The Poles were concentrated round a cluster of farms by the hamlet of Dolova, and were still busy digging support-trenches in the hard soil. More field-telephones were being erected by small parties of soldiers. Overhead, airplanes—mostly bombers—flew incessantly. Horse-drawn field-kitchens, fodder and supply waggons, wheeled equipment of all sorts was being hurried away over fields and rutted lanes to the north-east. I was surprised to see, as I drove by, that both the large barracks and the temporary flying-field used by the air-force were deserted. Ambulances passed me continually, converted motor-buses with their windows whitewashed to conceal the wounded roughly packed on the ordinary seats. Everything showed me that the army was likely to fall back at any hour.

At the Military Headquarters I still found a certain optimism.

‘You will understand, Mademoiselle,’ said an officer, ‘that we must yield ground in order to straighten our line. Our real defence must lie along the rivers San and Vistula.’

'You will sacrifice all this region, then? And the Silesian heavy industry as well?'

'We are prepared for that. It's for ultimate victory. Poland will lose territory during the war, but she will gain more, much more, afterwards.'

I recognised in this theory the French defence plan for Poland, which called for delaying action on the frontiers, then falling-back to a strategic line. It seemed to explain the speed of this retreat. What I did not know was that the Poles had made big concentrations on the frontiers—between which the German motor-columns drove like spears. My friends of the local command did not realise that they would never be able to fall back fast enough, never unify their front on the Vistula or anywhere. In a few days their army would be split into fragments.

Indeed, there were always signs that the war was moving too fast for the Poles; like a second-rate boxer, they were being 'beaten to the punch.' Everything happened before they expected it; one saw this in little things.

'I say,' the Consul greeted me on my return, 'the local people want us to move on.'

'But I thought that yesterday you'd fixed up to work here for a time?'

'I did. The blighters were quite pleased. Now they're in a hurry for us to go. They won't even let us travel by Kielce: we must go to Lublin, they say.'

As we walked down the stairs the wireless in the crowded foyer was announcing, in Polish. It blared into *God Save the King*. We stopped, and I steadied myself against the wall. For me it was the worst moment of the war. First reactions are always personal, and I thought of my years on the staff of the League of Nations Union, and the organising of the

Peace Ballot. All that we had worked for seemed lost. London would be bombed, and the friends and the buildings that I loved, destroyed. My thought broadened. Would the future of Europe be the future of Wells' *Things to Come*? Annihilation, with plague and anarchy to follow? Or should we, after all, build a new and better League of Nations? Or a Federation of Europe? Could we establish social democracy if we destroyed this new tyranny, even though we had failed to establish it after destroying the old ones? Meanwhile, the Polish porter ran forward and kissed my hands, while the radio switched into the Marseillaise. I felt a little sick, and recollected that neither Britain nor France could prevent all these people falling into German hands.

Then came a change of mood. As we embarked in the consular car, one of the party was found missing. She was a middle-aged Englishwoman, who had gone off to buy tooth-paste or hairpins or face-cream. At last she returned, hung thick as a Christmas-tree with little bags. Then she summoned up holdalls, carpet-bags, suitcases, handbags and a typewriter, all of which she insisted on bringing with her. The Consul had abandoned his luggage; I put a few things into a pillow-slip and sat on it. The four-seater car had to hold six now. Our group included a Czech Jew. To take a non-British-subject seemed to the Consul most irregular; but our companion's record made him such a tit-bit for the Gestapo that the worthy man had allowed himself to be over-persuaded. His chauffeur looked at the car-springs and grimaced. He knew the roads we should have to travel by.

Leaving Cracow was curiously like leaving Katowice. It was on fire in three places, and columns of smoke swung across the town; most people thought a gas-attack was in

progress. The guns broke loose. As we came to the edge of the town we heard the familiar roar above, and again rooftop machine-guns cracked in series. We were caught as we had been before; but this time we drove on, though air-raid wardens ran out at the car. Again I noticed the strange calm of the Jews. Others screamed, and the din of anti-aircraft guns seemed to break one's eardrums; but the Jews, with their great beards and long black coats, went about the streets with dignity. At last we were clear of the town and had comparatively open driving.

'It's not so bad, this machine-gunning,' advanced the driver. 'It makes everything get off the road to take cover, and we can move.'

'If only these fools wouldn't keep trying to stop us, in the villages.'

'Oh, well,' he said, with a townsman's contempt, 'these damned peasants.'

As we drove, every so often the German 'planes flew over, in formation of three. After a considerable time, we came to a level crossing, as the barrier fell. The railwaymen were shaking with fright; one stumbled over his bicycle as he pushed it across the line.

'There's an alarm,' they said, 'we've orders to close the gates at an alarm.'

'But we want to get on. This is an official car.'

'We have orders to close the gates at an alarm.'

I looked back. There was a long line of cars behind us here, at the junction of main road and main railway line. Then the raider came, a single bomber which circled and observed us, with interest, it seemed.

'Please, we should like to move on,' we tried the railwaymen.

‘We have orders to close the gates at——’

‘Konsulat Angielski’, roared the Consul (the only two words of Polish he knew).

‘We have orders to——’

‘These *peasants!*’ exploded the chauffeur.

I caught the Consul with one eye on a deep ditch by the roadside; never mind, Ministers and Generals were to hide in such ditches before the flight was done. On this occasion (an anti-climax, but pleasant at the time) the German wheeled casually away.

I had hoped to stay at Tarnow for the night, but none of our party would agree. They did not want any shaves as close as those leaving Cracow and Katowice. So we turned north towards Sandomierz. The roads, which had been good, became appalling now; the chauffeur had to drive at a crawl. We climbed in and out of pot-holes, and as they grew deeper the amount of dust grew too. Our eyes gritted and stung; our hair was discoloured; dust hung like fog along the line of the road. It became dark and we were allowed no lights, but we drove on. The villages seemed deserted, and there was no sound of motors from behind. We were driving through an unseen countryside on an invisible road. Abruptly, light filled a fork in the road, and a man ran out against it, his hand raised: a police agent with rifle and bayonet.

‘You can’t take the left fork here,’ he called. ‘We’ve word that the Germans are coming through fast in the West.’

A few minutes later two cars, with luggage piled on the roof, turned in from a side-road.

‘They’re from Kielce’, said the driver. ‘Refugees.’

‘By jove,’ the Consul turned to me. ‘If we had gone by

Kielce we'd have been . . . we'd have been cut off.' He thought a moment. 'I think we must be running parallel with the German advance now, but well ahead, I hope.' Just then a sentry stopped us at a bridge, a long tunnel of girders, through whose steel lattice we could dimly see the water.

'Please drive slowly,' he said, 'the bridge is dynamited.' As we drove up the approach beyond the bridge the wide country opened out under the first light of a moon. I suddenly felt the loneliness of this deserted plain, ready-stripped for the invader who was moving quietly over it.

Hours later, we rumbled on to the cobbles of Sandomierz. We were at a key-point of the projected defence-line, for the town is at the junction of the San and Vistula, but I was not thinking of that. As we turned into a flinty square, I saw a roof against the sky, a lifting and a falling curve, with the purity of line which the late Polish Renaissance architecture sometimes achieves on the edge of Baroque. I was caught again by the magic of bricks and mortar which is always in wait for me. The others were more interested in hotels. I left them, then, at supper, to telephone my report to Warsaw, for which I had to get permission from half-a-dozen different officers. My colleague, Hugh Carleton Greene, like most people in Warsaw at that time, was singularly placid. Yet when I arrived in the capital two days later, to bring my personal report, I was to find that he and everybody else, including the Government, had left.

When I got back I found my party terribly uneasy. They had tried to walk down the street, but every ten yards they were stopped by cloaked figures, who flashed shaded torches and asked for their credentials. Beaten back to the smelly hotel, they had been sitting under the eyes of eight or ten

staring Poles. Each mouthful of egg or bread-and-cheese was watched home, 'til the two ladies of the party were almost dropping their supper in their laps for frightened embarrassment. Something seemed to be worrying the Consul too, I fancied; perhaps it *was* that little matter of the German advance, though the suggestion would have distressed him. In any case, to my fury, it was decided to go on, and I had no chance then to see the buildings of Sandomierz—I wondered if I ever should again.

However, I was at least revenged, by the doss-house to which we came in the all-Jewish townlet of Rozwadow. Jews in Poland are a clean section of the population, but from that 'hotel' one would hardly have thought so. The three men in one room and we women in cubicles all slept in bug-marked sheets which we inherited from a line of previous users. I thought it a case for whisky, and so did the men. They yelled for glasses. A comic mask appeared in the door, a face drawn out and flattened, with a drooping nose and eyes that kept consciousness with an effort.

'Glasses, please.'

'Ugh?'

'Glasses!'

'Glasses, ugh? Glasses. What sort of glasses?'

'To drink with.'

'Ugh-Ugh.' Silence. 'To drink what with?'

The chauffeur, who was translating, shouted with rage, and the face disappeared. Then he broke out laughing.

'You should hear his Polish,' he said.

The other women refused to drink anything; but it was only after a stiff one that I could wrap myself in my burberry, to keep the bugs out, and drop on the filthy bedding for a few hours' sleep.

Meanwhile, before we reached Rozwadow that night, an odd thing had happened. Beyond Sandomierz the river San divides, for some kilometres, into separate channels. High-backed wooden bridges carry the road, and at each of these a guard was posted. Otherwise, this marshy country was deserted as the plain before Sandomierz. Repeatedly we found ourselves held up on these bridges by a heavy saloon car, which seemed to have engine-trouble. Its occupants would chat to each guard while the motor was put right, then on it would slide without a sign of trouble as far as the next bridge. Presently I saw a reflection of light out of the roof of the car: it looked remarkably like signalling to the enemy. This was evidently another piece of that German espionage which had been so successful in the first thirty or forty hours of the war. Should I mention it to the Consul, poor man? He might feel called upon to interfere, and that would be folly, unarmed on the empty marsh. Useless, also, to warn the stupid Polish guards, who would most likely arrest our party instead. My anxiety grew. Then suddenly the car swung away down a side-lane, stopping behind a screen of trees.

Next day, after Rozwadow, we picked up the big car on the road. I noticed the occupants now, four men and two women; I thought the younger woman the loveliest creature I had ever seen. Next day I was speaking to a local official.

'We seem to be getting all the spies in Poland,' he said. 'There are arrests every day. Thirty were arrested yesterday.'

'Men or women?'

'Both. Among them an extraordinarily beautiful girl.'

'Well?'

'All shot,' he said.

IV

LUBLIN AND WARSAW

[September 4th-9th]

WE arrived in Lublin on September 4th. At that moment it was an important war-centre, for the High Command was not far away. Lublin was the point of contact between the south-west, the south-east and Warsaw. Officers kept arriving and leaving, or sat in the outdoor cafés, or conferred in the hotels. Only private soldiers (save for the dispatch-riders) were not to be seen: they were somewhere else, doing the fighting.

Lublin was not only a military city. It was one of the chief manufacturing towns of Poland, and at this time the industrial population had not shifted away. On the contrary, lorries, buses, converted post-waggons came in every day, bringing industrial workers from as far off as Poznan. Industry in Lublin was to be super-staffed, speeded up and used for war production. The population was also added to by wealthy families who had come to Central Poland for safety, from Warsaw or the West. Now that people of smaller means began to arrive there was no room for them; I met groups of travellers trudging from house to house asking for lodging.

I wandered off to the old part of the town, the medieval gateway with its incongruous additions, the discreet sixteenth- and seventeenth-century façades round the 'Ring.' An equally pleasant Baroque façade caught my eye as I walked on—the St. Stanislas church. I went in, and was startled. I

had often longed to strip churches in Italy, to see better the forms and balance of the structure. Here was a church stripped. Every picture, every statue and embellishment had been removed. And the effect was gaunt and cold. Baroque is theatre, I thought, architecture dramatized. It needs non-architectural elements to set off its own forms. Two workmen staggered out with something, perhaps part of a rood-screen; and the young priest directing them greeted me with cheerful calm.

Meanwhile there were things to be done. The local authorities had provided a flat for us all. It was lent by Madame Sophie Wyszynska, the widow of a Polish diplomat—a former Counsellor of Embassy in Berlin; she left with her child by the last train, for air-raids had begun and rail-transport was failing entirely. Among the knick-knacks, ornaments and miniatures, now appeared a typewriter, books and seals, for this was also, for the moment, the Katowice Consulate. A Union Jack hung from the balcony. The Consul was badgered by inquirers: Palestinian Jews and their relatives, Poles trying in vain to buy British passports, people who wanted anything from petrol to a commission in the British army. Another of his problems was the evacuation of the two women of the party to Warsaw. Since I had in any case to visit Greene, the harassed man deputed this job to me. Trains were said still to be running from Warsaw to Riga, where the two could get a boat for England.

We left for Warsaw on the morning of Tuesday the sixth. Many of the cars we passed carried the letters 'C.D.' to show them the property of foreign diplomats. Some also flew small national flags on their bonnets, while the Americans had enormous Stars and Stripes wrapped over the roof.

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We also met a number of Polish Government cars. What had happened, then, in Warsaw? Was the capital being transferred? Could the city be threatened so soon? At last we met a British car and stopped it. The Commercial Attaché (for it was he) would tell us little. He admitted, when I pressed him hard, that the British Embassy was leaving Warsaw, but 'for an unknown destination.' Certainly they were leaving in comfort, and my empty stomach felt emptier as I watched the meal he ate while I questioned him. He thought the Consulate-General in Warsaw might still be functioning, so we made speed onward. Before long, military outriders, on motor-bikes, announced some really important person. President Moscicki was leaving his capital in a stately Rolls, also 'for an unknown destination.' By the time I saw him on the road, the German radio had already announced what his 'unknown' destination was. Throughout the war the Germans were always to know, and within an hour or two to bomb, even the most outlandish places where the Government or the General Staff might spend a night.

We arrived in Warsaw about four in the afternoon. I dropped the two good ladies outside the Consulate-General, while I went on to see Greene at his flat. To my surprise I found that he had left in a hurry, although the maid seemed to think he would return. I rang through to the Europejski Hotel, where other journalists had been staying, to be told that all remaining British subjects had been ordered to leave Warsaw and had departed earlier in the day. I rushed back to the Consulate, to find the two ladies nearly in tears, for the Consulate was closed and the Consul-General gone. There was a train going that night to Riga, but my companions now refused to wait for it, and insisted on returning

with me to Lublin. It sounded easy to return the way we had come (even with an air-raid in progress) but we had only five litres of petrol in the car. Petrol in Warsaw, even with military permits, was unobtainable.

It seemed for a moment that the car must be abandoned. A useless car, two half-hysterical passengers, and a city already evacuated; I had put my head into a trap this time. Moreover, if I failed to return his car, the Consul and his companions would be immobilized, perhaps cut off, in Lublin. Quite at a loss, I went round to the British Embassy. Although the staff had left earlier in the day, the Military Mission remained, its lorries and cars waiting outside. I wandered round the Embassy yard, asking advice of various officers I knew. It was, as I heard afterwards, difficult for them that I was there at all, for the time of their departure from Warsaw was a guarded secret. Yet they were unvaryingly kind. With a note from the Military Attaché, I went on to the Americans, at whose Embassy I was most generously received. By collecting odd amounts of petrol from different tins they made up enough for my journey back. It may be that we owed our lives to them.

I had been really scared and now I was exhausted and hungry too, for I had eaten nothing all that day. Happily, I had collected a bottle of champagne from my colleague's flat in Warsaw. The others were as disinclined for it as they had been for whisky at Rozwadow, so I curled up with it in the car and consumed a great part on my own. I hardly noticed the air-raids as we came through; at last, at two a.m., we reached Lublin.

In the morning I felt how things had changed in the city. The German air-offensive was severe now, a raid every few hours, and the townspeople were badly frightened. They

grouped in the hall-ways of apartment blocks and talked uneasily. The poorer people collected under archways and looked out at the sky. A message was sent up, asking that the Union Jack be removed from our balcony, so as not to 'attract' raiders. Lublin was going through a process we were to see repeated elsewhere; it was being eaten to the bone. Some food remained in the shops, in the restaurants there was almost none at all. The increasing number of refugees had upset the town's whole economy. I was even more disturbed by the signs of demoralisation among the Polish officers. On the day of my return I recognised the car of an acquaintance, Count X, standing empty. A senior officer shouted to its driver:

'Take me to Lwow' (pronounced L'-voof).

'Excuse me, I believe this is Count X's car,' I intervened.

'I don't care whose car it is,' he answered in English, pushing me aside. 'The news is appalling and I'm getting away to Lwow as fast as I can.'

It was impossible to verify this news. The 'Polski Radio' transmitted lie after lie about Polish 'victories.' British and French stations were mostly 'jammed' by the Germans. We had no idea how far the enemy had advanced. We did not even know whether London had been bombed—I wondered idly if my flat in Westminster existed still.

Our ignorance was equalled by that of the British Embassy and the rest of the diplomatic corps. Settled at Nałęczów, a spa not far from Lublin, they found themselves cut off from everything. Many of the telegrams they sent, I was told later, never reached the addresses at all. It took them two or three hours to put a telephone call through. No communications reached them in Nałęczów, save perhaps an occasional telegram. Such disorganisation was understandable in

Katowice or Cracow, with the Germans a few kilometres away: but hardly so in a town that was the centre of government. It was already clear that leaving Warsaw had been disastrous. Once out of the capital, the Government was never able to get the administrative machine—or even the war-machine—working smoothly again. They had not the mechanical facilities—telephone, telegraph, railway, aviation—on a big enough scale outside the special conditions of the capital. Nor were they left long enough in one place; German espionage and bombing saw to that. Besides all this, there was the moral effect of the flight; many Poles felt the war to be lost when the head of the State left Warsaw.

For our own party, events were to come tumbling. On the second evening after my return, three American journalists came to the 'Consulate', stuck, like everyone else, for want of petrol.

'You know we've got none to spare,' the Consul said to me. 'Do be kind and go and give them a spot of whisky, anyway.' I went in and saw with delight two Warsaw colleagues of mine. They had with them a news-film man, a tuft-headed giant with the mind of a romantic boy of ten. When the Germans dived and machine-gunned, or dropped their bombs, he rushed towards them, camera extended.

'Gee,' he commented, 'am I one crazy guy?'

According to him, very little happened beyond the field of vision of his lens. At the moment he was worried, not about petrol or food or three nights of sleeplessness, but about getting his precious film-rolls out of the country. He ended every story with the moving slogan '*The Eyes and Ears of the World!*' These three carried me off to talk shop for an hour or two, and on my return, late at night, I found

the Consul distinctly bothered. He had had word from Nałenczow for an immediate move. Meanwhile, the Embassy had handed over to him three more adults and a child to evacuate. Poor man! This meant nine adults and a child in his four-seater. After a night at the telephone, he induced the military authorities to lend a car—a piece of great generosity, in the situation. Now not only the new charges could be got away, but our two dear ladies as well. At five a.m. they all left, crowded, but with all their complement of bags, for Lwów. Two hours later the rest of us were clear of the city, en route for Luck (pronounced Wootsk), the capital of the eastern border province of Wolhynia. Had I known that Lublin was to become ‘news,’ as the centre of Hitler’s Jewish colony, I should have looked at it on leaving with an added curiosity.¹

Across Eastern Poland the roads push out white and whiter, trails of packed dust. First we passed peasant carts, as we had done before. As these thinned out we came up with the car traffic, and presently there were British flags among them. We waved to one car and stopped. Out of it jumped the young Hankey, whom I had last seen, a model of correctness, at the Embassy. Unshaven, rumped, ankle-deep in the dust of the road-side, he still had the same pale, merry eye.

‘Good Lord, fancy seeing you here!’

‘Where are you all off to?’ I asked.

‘Why, an unknown destination, of course,’ he chuckled.

‘This war gets me down.’

¹As I have said above, Lublin is a pleasant and liveable town, but not capable, in spite of its markets and its industry, of supporting a great additional population. Its own Jewish element was large, but not abnormal for a Polish city. A Polish friend who escaped in November told me that the penniless Jews arriving then in Lublin found an over-crowded, hungry town, offering no chance of work or living quarters.

We reached Luck. The capital of Poland's easternmost province looked what it was. Outside the central blocks of the city, it tumbled away into wooden shacks and the open booths of craftsmen. A vague ring of villas and some apartment-blocks seemed all the living-space there was. The search for lodgings was ferocious. Time after time I was sent to places already full, to the wrong places, and finally to a bungalow without any furniture. At last I was given a bed at a monastic college, in a room which I shared with three men. I had done worse, often, in the Balkans, and was content enough. But next evening I was turned out—to make room for the General Staff. I wondered how many generals would sleep in my bed. Under the Consul's goading, the local officials produced another address for me, the Countess Chodkiewicz, 'outside the city.' There was nothing to do but investigate it. The drive seemed long; would this ever do? I questioned. After dark, the car drew up at a big house. There was murmured talk in Polish, someone seemed to be protesting. I felt desperate: 'Ask if anyone speaks French,' I said to the driver.

'Mais certainement,' came a voice from the dark steps, a beautiful voice but not that of a young woman. I ran up the steps and introduced myself and my need.

'But of course, Mademoiselle, we will find you a bed, and your chauffeur too. If you will wait a few minutes. Much of the furniture has been moved, and we have other guests also.'

The torch-light showed only that the Countess was tall and grey, and her house a matter of stone halls and echoing passages. But I was happy to feel her kindness. As soon as a bed was ready I dropped into it and slept.

V

INTERLUDE IN VOLHYNIA

IN retrospect, the days at Połonka seem to make up a moment outside time. For me, events paused, before running on to the final catastrophe.

What at midnight had seemed a barrack became in the sun a long, single-storey house out of the late eighteenth century. It was perfect in proportion and simplicity, a white building standing in a lawn like a meadow, and yet buried in the trees. That wood was to be our safeguard soon, for it made the big house invisible from the air. In front and at the back, semicircular porches stood out in groups of pilasters. The stone hall connecting them had lost its pictures now, buried somewhere, but heads and horns were still strung along its walls. I looked into the rooms leading off on each side and saw furniture, Russian, not Polish, in design. Even the oil lamps had been bought in Petrograd. We were out of Pilsudski's republic now. This was the summer residence of a Russian landowner—the Russia of another time—of which the Countess Chodkiewicz was the fitting centre.

The Countess' colouring showed her Russian blood. She seemed more than sixty, with hair greying, but her tawny skin was as supple as that of a woman thirty years younger. There was youth too in her eyes, which the cheekbones underlined, giving proportion to the length of her face. She had a simple way and a certain ruggedness, which made her seem, as fully as the peasants, a part of her own fields.

The Countess had a stoic dignity. She realised, even then, that she might not live many days. Yet she said only:

‘Mademoiselle, do you know how far it is to the Russian frontier? A hundred and fifty kilometres. It is not the Germans whom we think of here.’ I was never to know her show anxiety for herself, only a shadow for the tiny grandchild, asleep on the lawn, while its father fought, up in the Corridor. The Countess’ children still at home had not their mother’s vitality. Her daughter was a heavy blonde, with pale, opaque colouring and hair on her lip; the youngest son papery and lisping, with a cleft palate. But she had taught them both her repose.

The Countess’ gardens were raised above the surrounding marsh and ringed by a great hedge, from which many of the trees grew. Here and there gaps occurred so that I could see, from the terrace, the wooden church of Połonka, like a white miniature. Below the garden was a marsh-stream, with the punt moored at a little staging, as though we might make a water-picnic that day. As I walked along the causeway to the village I noticed frogs and toads which seemed larger than I had seen before, lizards, and highly-coloured beetles. Larger patches of colour were made by the marsh flowers. All around, the peasants were cutting the tall grass for winter bedding, even in mid-September sinking a little into the mud as they did so.

The village itself was a huge square of earth, Russian style, with wooden houses on three sides. In the centre, ducks and geese swam in the communal dirty pond. A scattering of villagers stood outside their huts: a young woman in a red kerchief, an old moujik of a man, and others, all Russian-speaking. Their houses varied in size and cleanliness, but I could read poverty in the inertia of the people

and the hamlet's lifelessness. There was no shop nor any place where one could buy food—had there been food to buy; no movement, no interest, not a plot of private ground. Yet these people were farming one of the richest soils of Europe. I found no concern for the war. A group of Polish airmen was in the village, but hardly anyone talked with the men. Elsewhere in the east, as I was to find out soon, peasants hid in the forests to avoid conscription. In the German settlements scattered over this region every man might be reckoned a Nazi spy.

Połonka's only interest seemed to be in the Orthodox Church which I had seen from the house, standing on its hillock over against the ridge. I sat with my head against the church wall, hearing the chant through the thin plank-ing, and with a view beyond the marshes. The ridge came obliquely across my eye; its red earth burned through the thin grass which covered it. Thence I looked down into the plain, land all patched and striped with yellow, russet, olive-green and purple, between the black tree-masses. The sun hung rayless out of a closed sky. The same reddish light soaked land and clouds, giving form to the haycocks below me, picking out shapes of cattle, the tone broken only by a cold smoke on the skyline. The values were those of an expressionist painting.

As I sat, I felt a reverberation from the sky. It grew into a sound which I had not heard since the Luck road. The men in the fields stared up, while I, remembering machine-guns, sheltered close to a hayrick. Three bombers slipped out of a cloudbank, high and leisurely; there was the familiar sound like doors slamming, the puffs of shell wide of their mark, and then the tremour of bombs. A cylinder of smoke pushed up from Luck, toppling slowly in the wind. I looked

round me for a moment, to see the sun setting over Eastern Poland.

My fellow-guests at the house were poor game for a journalist. Among them were a surly provincial governor, an ex-minister who evidently thought me a spy, and a stodgy bourgeoisie with giggling daughters. Then, on the second evening, some thirty airmen came. They arrived with faces black from exposure and petrol fumes, after camouflaging their 'planes in the woods across the valley. I stole back after supper and looked into the big room where they were crowded at table. Two or three candles gave all the light, catching features, the breast of a tunic, the shine of a button. Countess Chodkiewicz and her daughter were themselves serving, grey and blonde head stooping over the officers moving in and out of the shadows. It was a Hont-horst, a Rembrandt even, I thought as I went away.

The airmen were at the house next day. Their lieutenant, a stringy boy with a blob of a face, apologised for his hoarseness.

'I'd a bad throat before the war started and I've not been much on the ground since. Ah, Mademoiselle, it's cold, you know, up there.' They would not speak of their air-fighting, but instead they told me of the long caravans, dragging desperately across Central Poland, and how, as they went, the German fighters would dive and machine-gun men, women and children. Very few of the poor, with their slow-going waggons, ever escaped from Poland. By this time, even at Połonka, we began to be conscious of intense raiding. Beginning at dawn, the bombers would go over at timed intervals, raiding Luck ten or a dozen times before noon. There seemed to me something crass, almost fatuous, about this meticulous timing. The German espionage had

discovered, within forty-eight hours, the arrival of government and military headquarters in Luck. The town was undefended save for anti-aircraft batteries—ineffective enough—and they were slowly pounding it to bits. Meanwhile, our airmen peered up through field-glasses, while they waited for petrol supplies, and listened to the wireless between raids. Suddenly the full voice of a B.B.C. announcer came through.

'Yet another successful flight of R.A.F. 'planes over Berlin took place yesterday. A very large quantity of leaflets are believed to have been dropped in the suburbs.'

It was now that I began to feel the Poles' growing sense of their betrayal by Britain. Rash assurances had been given by British lecturers in Poland. When it became clear that we should not move a man or a 'plane save on the western front the reaction was bitter, though almost to the end there were stories of R.A.F. squadrons in Warsaw. Even for their lack of petrol we were blamed by the pilots, I found.

'Had the Anglo-Polish loan been adequate, we could have imported petrol and stored it throughout the country,' they argued. 'We were prevented from doing so because you kept us short of foreign exchange.' I protested, for I knew that one reason for the shortage was the breakdown of their own transport, due partly to bad organising, but more to raiding of convoys and reservoirs, which the German espionage always located successfully. But my fliers had also a tale of commercial negotiations which failed and for which they held us responsible. This may have been unjust, but I knew that Poland had been obliged to sell us anti-aircraft guns (which she needed so badly) to finance her petroleum purchases.

In Luck I found greater antagonism. The township was

disintegrating. Not only were food and clothes unbuyable, so was everything else from cigarettes to bicycles. The cafés had tea but neither beer nor coffee, and all the food I could find was pickled cucumbers—canned in England. Refugees swarming eastward had eaten up the town like locusts; and indeed, after its bombing it rather resembled a ruined honeycomb. When I tried to telegraph I found that I needed my military pass and even the support of my old friend the Consul (whom I met, fortunately) before my wires were accepted. As the clerks read my English messages they cursed me, in German, and I afterwards found that none reached England or elsewhere. The Consul was not surprised.

‘When I went along to the Provincial Governor this morning,’ he said, ‘the man refused to see me and sent word he couldn’t accept my credentials.’

Just then the whistles blew. I was still in the Post Office, and in a moment the reverberation of bombs began, and the big building stirred. The doors were being locked but I broke free, just as the nearest bomb fell. A warden ran out to stop me and like some old spinster I shouted ‘English! English!’ and waved my passport. The warden spat. Behind him, in the archway, a group sheltering broke into jeers and curses.

I felt that my Wolkynian interlude was over. Luckily there was one person quite unaffected by this hostility: the Countess Chodkiewicz. I had already word from our Embassy that the long German pincers were closing. German tanks were in Lwow. It might be needful to take a flying jump for Roumania, if one was to reach it at all. As for my Czech Jew, an interval of inaction seemed to have broken his nerve, or else the old refugee smelt the danger from a new quarter.

He was restless, nervy, begging me to leave; but I had no petrol. Hours of argument with the Tank Corps, who alone had any, earned me nothing.

'Now don't worry, Mademoiselle,' said the Countess, 'I believe the Air Force officers are expecting petrol. Let *me* speak to the Colonel.'

I watched her with the grim little man, gracious yet deferential to his rank. His face was like a war-idol; her warm skin caught the light as she spoke. Then in a few minutes she was back, successful. When at last the supplies came and the little Colonel had strutted away, dangling a bottle of my whisky, I tried for the last time what I had endeavoured before.

'Madame la Comtesse, won't you let me arrange for you all to leave for Roumania? There is still time, and there is always danger.'

Unlike her government, Countess Chodkiewicz proved unwilling to leave Polish soil.

'Thank you, Mademoiselle, thank you. I have no-one in Roumania. We could not be beggars in a foreign country.' As we drove away she watched from the steps, with son and daughter, the blue airmen's uniforms moving about in the shadow of the porch behind her.

VI

HURRIED JOURNEY

It was a beautiful, dusty journey to Krzemieniec, mostly along a ridge of hills, through the same red-earthed countryside. The peasants were still working on the harvest. I passed through very few villages, for they mostly lay away to right and left of the road; but near the larger ones the way grew crowded with peasant carts, bringing maize to the barns. The cars and lorries, now, had not only lights and metal trimmings papered blue; they were also camouflaged with leaves or branches, or else mud-smeared. I saw, amused, that the Americans had even had mud-colour painted on their cars. Suddenly the peasants began running! I called to one near the road.

‘What’s the matter? Why is everyone running?’ He turned a heavy face toward me.

‘A ‘plane. A German ‘plane. They’ve brought it down over there.’

‘What are you going to do?’ He had spoken in the peasant’s removed, neutral way, and I was curious.

‘See them take the man away. They’ll put him in a prison.’ He spoke without feeling. He was the permanent thing on this land, however many conquests he suffered. I jumped out and ran, in the soft earth of the fields, until I came up with a Polish pilot, grounded for want of petrol, with the breathless peasants standing round him.

The first town on my way was Dubno, where, as I believed, the Ministry of the Interior was housed. I had been warned to make a *détour*, to avoid repairs in the road,

and my turn brought me out within sight of a moated castle. It was nothing but a huge, curving curtain-wall, built of a dark red stone, without crenellation or loopholes or any architectural feature. Evidently the wall had once been higher, for it was crumbling from the top. Over the ruined parapet I could see the roofs of dwellings in the inner bailey. The thing squatted there, under the afternoon sun, humped on a low bluff in the plain. There was not even a stick of vegetation to break the flat light over it. Against ramshackle Dubno, it looked so anonymous, so ambiguous, that it seemed the relic of a tale from Grimm. I sat looking, and wishing the Poles had a Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments, to take care of this one.

Suddenly came the scream and roar of a raid. I drove under the trees. There was the German espionage again : they knew already of the Ministry in Dubno and were bombing it, as well as some gasometers, a barracks and a railway-line. No-one was hurt, so far as I could see ; but after some minutes a horse came charging from an alley, then another, their light droszkies harnessed to them still. They galloped with a hideous high action of the fore-quarters, a reaching which tore at one's consciousness. Below, blood and intestines came away. If only one could have stopped that agony. I drove on to Krzemieniec with the memory at the back of my brain.

Krzemieniec, which housed the Diplomatic Corps and the Polish Foreign Office, looked like the set for a Polish ballet. The little town was built on the side of a hill, and it rose from the main road in tiers of bright-painted, fretwork houses. Across the valley, a sugarloaf hill balanced a citadel rather like the one so often floodlit in Budapest. The arrival of the diplomats in Krzemieniec had been amusingly

heralded. An afternoon or two before, a certain Countess, a nearby landowner, had been doing her shopping in Krzemieniec. Seeing an expensive car, with 'F' and 'C.D.' in large plates on the front of it, she looked in and saw Léon Noël, Ambassador of France to Warsaw, with a three days' beard on his chin.

'My dear Ambassador, what are you doing, sitting in your car in Krzemieniec?' She did not say 'with three days' beard on your chin.'

'Chère Comtesse, the Corps Diplomatique is coming here. I am merely the vanguard. At the moment, my secretary is vainly seeking the Mayor of this place.'

'Come with me,' said the good lady.

On learning their business the Mayor could only murmur, in a dazed way: 'Such distinguished visitors! But where shall we put so many people? Where shall we put so many distinguished——?'

'Come, come,' said the Countess. 'There are two hotels. Monsieur l'Ambassadeur will take one and the British the other. The Americans and the missions can be lodged in villas round the town. I'll put up the Hungarians, whom I know well.'

In this way it was arranged; and on my arrival I found my way to the Hotel Bono, now the British Embassy. It was a one-storied wooden building, whose front door opened on to the main street. Inside was a long corridor, with rooms leading off on either side; these were now combined bedrooms and offices. In one, young Hankey and the wireless operator slept, and wrestled with a huge transmitting set, nicknamed 'the iron lung.' On this it was intended that they should report to London—if all communication failed—their movements and the progress of the war. They

only once got a message through; London forebore to reply—in case the transmitter might be the enemy. In another room, the cypherer laboured at the 'incessant reports by telegram, most of which, I suspect, never reached England. A third was shared by the Commercial Counsellor and the Third Secretary, a softly-snarling youth whom I disliked increasingly. Only the Ambassador held viceregal state in a room alone. The hotel had no bathroom, but there was indoor sanitation; rather unfortunately, since one could not forget its existence for long. In peace-time, the Warsaw Embassy had been the friendliest and most helpful I knew; it had not changed now. I was sat on a soap-box by Mrs. Norton, the Counsellor's wife, given sherry, and leisure to look round at the diplomats in their new environment.

We sat and talked until the Ambassador came in.

'Hm, you're a peculiar woman, Miss Hollingworth,' he greeted me. 'What are you doing, running about in the middle of all this? Love of excitement, I suppose.'

'I'm a journalist, Sir Howard. This is how I earn my living.'

'Pff, journalist! What's the trouble? No family?'

Sir Howard Kennard is one of the rudest men I know, and definitely the rudest diplomat alive. But no one minds his rudeness, for the eyes behind his spectacles go on twinkling at one all the time. If he were polite, I should feel that something had gone wrong indeed. Tall and slim, and handsome in his grizzled way, Sir Howard enjoyed immense prestige with the Poles before Munich. He admitted that before then he could 'talk to Beck like a father'; and after, found himself cold-shouldered. He was one of the diplomats who nearly resigned over that disastrous turn of policy. I

doubt if historians will call Kennard a great Ambassador, but he was successful until his Government failed him. Also, he was wise enough to use his admirable staff.

Of these, the chief was always his Counsellor, Clifford Norton. Civil Service appointments so often might be better that one is grateful indeed for such a man in an embassy. Norton has an air of being not quite in this world, as though the top part of his head were floating some miles up. To hear him say 'Ye-es, Ye-e-s' is to get a breath of the outer stars. As soon as something needs to be decided and done, you see that he is vague in manner only. Nor is he without fire. During one of the earlier crises, I think that of Munich, he was dining with other diplomats, including a German Secretary of Embassy.

'Ah,' said his German colleague, after dinner, 'I fear there may be war. But a short war, I think, don't you? With a negotiated peace.' Norton, that quiet man, lost his temper. Smacking his hand on the mantelpiece, he exclaimed:

'No! If Germany destroys the peace of Europe twice in a generation, I cannot foresee either a short war or a negotiated peace. It will have to be stopped once and for all.'

It is not often that a woman, even an ambassadress, plays the part in an embassy that Mrs. Norton did. A little later, when the staff were leaving Krzemieniec, I was to see her stamping round, hitching her eye-shade, exclaiming:

'Why should I go first, Sir Howard? I'm here because I can do a man's work.' She under-rated herself; I have not often known a man of her strength or effectiveness. At various stages in her career she earned a four-figure salary in the advertising world; she raised the London Gallery, in

a year, to be the chief *avant garde* art gallery in England; and for a well-known American car, she held the European agency. To-day she is doing far more for Polish refugees than anyone else on the Continent. At the time I write of, it was she who had been placed in charge of the evacuation of the Embassy, and it was thanks to her that Britain's Ambassador and his staff came through the war safely, and without severe hardship.

The fourth person who, so to speak, made up the essence of the Embassy, was Robin Hankey. There is no doubt that this young man inherits a share of his father's brilliance; though one must take time to penetrate the layers of ordinary, amiable youth. His white terrier, 'Smallsize,' tumbled at his heels throughout the war. Now *en poste* in Bucarest he is doing splendid work.

A Roumanian said of him, 'Hankey is the only British Diplomat I've ever met who has remained a human being.'

I was taken to dine in a large building not far off; it seemed to be a disused school or college. On forms and trestle tables, in a long, bare room, the Polish government was trying to feed the diplomatic corps, and the staff of their own foreign office. Ministers, Secretaries of Embassy, heads of departments, Chinese, Italians, Central and South Americans, all sat jumbled along the benches like schoolboys. There was not restaurant space enough for more than a quarter of them. Some, in fact, had avoided the scrum: the American Ambassador Biddle sat with his wife and her daughter in Sir Howard Kennard's company, at a little restaurant opposite. Abruptly there came a great running. Sir Howard had left his door locked at the 'Embassy' with the light switched on and staring forth into the blackout. Ambassador or no, the wardens stormed, and all scurried off

to interrupt the party, who were in the middle of their ham and eggs. Meanwhile, Hankey introduced me to the imposing Chief of the Protocol, the diplomatic master of ceremonies. Friends among the diplomats waved to me, and we sat down to one egg and rice.

‘We’re sorry it’s such a poor meal,’ said the Polish official in charge.

‘Not at all.’

‘It will be better in a week or so,’ he went on, ‘when we have had time to arrange the organisation and supply of food.’ Neither he nor we could know that before that week was ended the government would have left Poland.

Over dinner, I proposed a scheme. I had now a fast car of my own. Raids and retreats were ceasing to be news. Why should I not make a long dash back to Warsaw? It was still being held, and so far as we knew the road was open. The diplomats were properly horrified; then I saw a sort of interest dawn. There were, they admitted, two Englishwomen who had got stranded in Warsaw . . . there was a man at a hospital in Lublin; now, if I insisted on going, perhaps. . . . I had seen enough on my last visit to the capital to guess that the evacuation of British subjects had not been brilliantly carried out. I knew, too, that the suggestion of reserving ‘planes for the purpose had been turned down, although there were machines available in London. It does not surprise me that complaint has since been made to the Foreign Office by those whose relatives were, in effect, abandoned. I agreed to keep an eye open for the people in whom the Embassy were interested.

Early next day I started, leaving the Czech Jew behind me for safety. In Łuck I met the Consul from Katowice again.

'What are you doing, driving west?' he asked. 'Even this hole is getting too hot now.'

'I'm going to Warsaw.'

'Warsaw! Impossible, you know you can't. The road must be cut, you know. Really. Come. You'll be killed. You'll drive into the German lines.' He almost panted.

'It's quite all right,' I soothed him. 'The road is open, I've got a good car, and I shall be back in a couple of days.'

'But really! Oh, who would have journalists to keep an eye on? . . . Then at least let me give you my spare petrol: you'll get none west of here.'

I left him, full of conscientious worry and disapproval, and drove on, westerly. There were few cars on the road now, but I must have met thousands of refugees, most of them travelling on foot. There are signs which anyone who has been concerned with refugees knows well, when the cost of the flight becomes too high. The individual feels that events have overwhelmed him. He has given up all hope of reaching safety; as a person, he hardly exists at all, but as a human mechanism he goes on functioning, dragging, in the mass, blindly on. There were still children among those I saw; loaded two and three into prams, dragging further and further behind and becoming lost or abandoned.

After some time, there came the roar of 'planes, lower than I had heard them hitherto, and sudden, because of the absence of alarms. Two fighters came in view, diving at the road. The peasants hurled themselves desperately to either side, a confusion of running figures, of flinging skirts, overturned carts and prams and baggage. Flat in the fields, they covered their heads in a fold of coat or sacking, with the ostrich-impulse of terror. The gallant fliers roared

over, raking the road and fields with fire. A horse dropped and lay kicking. When most of the peasants returned to the road, ten minutes later, I noticed that half a dozen lay on, their heads under a fold of sacking.

This scene was repeated again before I reached Lublin. Many of the refugees I saw must have been killed later on; comparatively few ever reached the safety of Hungary or Roumania. By this time, parts of the road were half-destroyed by bombardment. In the open country, at night, and without lights, these bomb-craters might have been death-traps for me. Several times the police stopped me from entering villages; I had to take my car across the dried-out ditches and make a circuit across fields. One got along far quicker by way of these hard fields; had I known the country better, I should have made more use of them.

In the afternoon I reached Lublin again. It was nearly unrecognisable. The quarter in which we had all lived a few days before no longer existed: the miniatures, and that fantastic furniture, were buried in several acres of ruins. More than furniture lay under the runs, in Lublin. Many people must have been buried, perhaps buried alive, in the wreckage of one of the apartment-blocks I saw; but I did not notice any rescue-gangs at work, such as those of whose devotion in Warsaw we were to hear later on. The town was pitted with desolated areas, as well as with collapsed houses, where only one bomb had struck; but by good fortune the churches seemed to have been missed. Besides the buildings, the drainage system had been destroyed, and in the gutters of the main street, sewage ran. The drinking water must have been infected. I wondered how soon cholera would be breaking out, for it was hot still, and flies almost covered the bodies of horses, dogs and men, lying on

the pavement. It is a bad sign when the living are too preoccupied to bury the dead, and I was not surprised to see evidence of looting; shop windows, cracked by explosives, had been pushed in, and part of the contents rifled. The main street had a dishevelled look, very different from when I left it, and the people scuttled apprehensively along.

Since there had been no food four days before, I did not expect to find any now, but I stopped at a restaurant.

"I'm afraid you'll find nothing to eat there, Mademoiselle," said a voice, and I found a tall, rather smart young man, speaking from the far side of the car.

"Nor will you find much in the direction you're going," he added, "if you're really driving west."

"Yes, I'm driving to Warsaw."

"You have strange taste, Mademoiselle."

"I'm a journalist."

"Ah, that explains it. But have you your route planned?"

"No, I should be grateful for your advice."

"I should be happy. I have just come from there. Have you a map?"

In a moment the young Warsaw lawyer, as he said he was, began working over my indifferent map, marking, directing.

"You must follow this carefully," he warned. "You can't depend on the peasants for information. They're too scattered now." He was marking my course almost without regard to roads.

"Roads are too much a target at present," he said. "You'd never get through both the raids and the refugees."

In half an hour I was away again. Soon I found myself following the course of small rivers, dry now, cutting over

fields, using cart-tracks and bridle-paths. I was back in the white, light dust of central Poland, the fields browned over with the stumps of maize. The countryside was deserted; cottages and fields were empty, and on my route I saw neither cars nor refugees on foot. When it grew too dark to drive I stopped, ate some biscuits, took a pull of whisky, and curled up for the night, with my electric torch and revolver on the seat beside me.

Sleeping in a car in the open air made me wake early. It was a clear morning, already light, and I could smell that it would be hot later on. The fabric of sounds from the birds was thinner, in that treeless country, than it is in England, but it was the first noise that had kept me company. As it faded in the early day, I drove off, disturbed again by the lack of human beings. Several times I felt so lonely that I found myself thinking how the vibration of a German bombing-squadron would break up the silence.

Suddenly, ahead of me, I saw a column of dust. 'Part of the retreating Polish forces?' I wondered. I watched until I could see the men marching, with a precision, it seemed to me, that one had not often noticed in the Poles. Then I caught in my breath, with a hollow feeling under my heart. I was sitting looking at a detachment of the German Army. For a moment I was so scared that, instead of turning the car, I shut off the engine and sat there, while the green uniforms got nearer. Then I shook myself, started up, and drove madly across the fields.

Running over firm meadows, bumping across maize-stubble, rolling into rutted tracks, with springs creaking, I stopped being afraid and thought of nothing but my driving. I was going in the right direction, I thought, but certainly not on the carefully chosen route along which I came, and

after two hours I was stopped by a broad stream. It had to be crossed on the way back to Lublin, and I drove along the bank, searching, methodically, and then desperately, for a bridge. I had gone far too far to the south. A rabble of peasants whom I met were too frightened and stupid to help me. 'Where could the German tanks be now?' I wondered. The mobile division was always well ahead of the infantry; and the infantry I had seen were far from skirmishers—they might have been parading down Unter den Linden in Berlin. Should I abandon my car and wade across? If I did, the Germans would soon overtake me. Then, at last, I found an old wooden bridge, with a group of peasants at the far side.

'Can anyone tell me the way to Lublin? Will one of you show me the way?'

After some muttered argument, a heavy, middle-aged man climbed in.

'Have the Germans passed this way?' I asked.

'No Germans. Only the machines.'

'You mean the tanks? When did they come? Where did they come from?'

'Ah, I don't know. They came last night and crossed the river. But where they came from, I don't know that.'

'Well, from which direction?'

'It would be over by Radom, or that way.'

'And where were they making for?'

'It was towards Policzna or maybe Gotah, the machines went. But we've seen no Germans.'

That meant that the Lublin-Warsaw road was cut, though not yet occupied.

As I approached Lublin, I passed a big American car with a man in uniform inside. We smiled and waved. It

was the American Military Attaché. I was not to see him again for any length of time until we met in Bucharest. He told me then how he had seen me leaving Lublin the day before; when he waved to me now, he knew that I had emerged from German-occupied territory.

VII

DIPLOMATS UNDER FIRE

WHEN I started back again along the road to Łuck, conditions were quieter. The shell-marked road was empty, or almost empty, and the sky clear of 'planes. This region too seemed to be already in the Germans' hands. 'I shall have no trouble with bombs, unless the Nazis are wasting them,' I thought, with the same serene glow after danger (like the feeling after a cold bath) which I had had on my drive from Warsaw to Lublin; only, I was forgetting that the further one drove from the German advance the more likely raids would become. They began not long before I reached Łuck. At this point, the road and the railway-line run parallel, a quarter of a mile apart. As I swung nearer to the line a train came into view, and almost at once I heard the sound of 'planes. There was a detonation, the crack of a small bomb with the ground-thud following, then another and a third. The train slid to a stop, its sides opened, and I saw figures running, jumping, diving into the long grass. Then the same thing happened as before. All three of the big bombers dived, one after another, and machine-gunned, not the road, but the people lying in the grass. I was a distance off, but the noise stunned me. I myself was safe, but I could not look at the 'planes as they dived; there always came a point when the assault on my senses, the noise and the fear, became too much for me. Then, in ten minutes perhaps, it was all by. I was

surprised again at what a large proportion of the travellers had survived the raid—survived it physically, at least, for several of the women were out of their minds. One ran forward and clung to the rails over which the train must pass.

‘Ah, I thought she wouldn’t hold out long,’ said another, with calm.

‘You have had much of this?’

‘Thirteen times. Thirteen times out of the train and into these fields. At last they will hit the train and it will be finished.’

The party, I learned, were mostly wives of officials. They had been in that train, hungry and thirsty, for about forty hours. Nevertheless, the children were jolly and unaware of danger, and laughed as they ran back to their train. The train windows were broken and its woodwork splintered, but it ground off again toward Luck. I heard later that every train leaving Warsaw had been bombed, especially those carrying government officials and their families. There were authentic stories of people three and four days on a train, bombed twenty times a day. It is astounding that the railway survived so long. Still, these people were lucky indeed compared with the peasant-refugees on the road.

I began to pass a great many troops now, fresh, untouched fellows with their supply-waggon complete, who had seen no fighting at all.

‘You’re marching in an odd direction,’ I suggested to an officer.

‘Why, no, Mademoiselle.’ He pulled at the cigarette I had given as bait—for tobacco seemed to be the thing they lacked. ‘We have orders to move . . . eastwards, you

know.' Eastwards. That meant the Russian frontier, and at the back of my mind I wondered why; but we were so full of the German attack just then that I thought no more. The only people one had met who expected Russian intervention were the old Polish aristocracy of the east, such as the Countess Chodkiewicz at Połonka, who had lost half their estates in the revolution and seen the rest fought over in the Russo-Polish war. So when the officers talked of fighting the Red Army, I took too little notice now. They themselves were pleased at this alternative to facing the German mechanised divisions.

'The Germans have not been fighting,' said my lieutenant, 'they have been trying to destroy the nation with their mechanised divisions. The Russians won't do that. They will fight, if they do fight, in a way we understand.' Behind all this talk I felt strong hidden criticism of the High Command, although no names were mentioned. The criticism of their senior officers was not so hidden.

'It must be nice for the staff, this war,' said a very young officer. 'They have cars. Their wives have cars. Their sisters and mothers and children and aunts and female cousins have cars too; army cars. All their baggage goes along on an army lorry.' None of this group knew where their families might be. Would they try to reach Lithuania? Or had they struggled to Lwow, making for the Roumanian and Hungarian frontiers? I was desperately sorry for them; but behind my sympathy I thought: 'you are still favoured ones. Your men haven't any doubt about *their* families; *they* haven't gone to Vilno or Lwów or Cernauti; they are still in their villages. Your men aren't wondering how their wives and children have escaped, because they know they haven't escaped at all. Your men are only wondering if

they are still alive, and how the Nazis are treating them.' This thought remained in my mind as I drove, for here the bombing had been on quite small villages. The tiny houses were flimsy at any time; now they stuck up splintered walls, from which a fine cloud of dust and smoke still rose, lightly. Occasionally one could think that the bombers' objective had been a railway-line, and that they had missed it and hit the cottages; but this was the exception. Besides, more than once I saw the airplanes swoop and fire on the peasants working, away over on the fields. Even the invaders of the *Völkerwanderung* of the dark ages had been content to let the land-folk go on producing for them.

So I reached Łuck again. Its final evacuation seemed to be going on, though the G.H.Q. remained in the college where we had once slept. Food was still unobtainable, so I took whisky. Of the better-paid classes, only journalists know the significance of food; my colleagues talked of getting tablets of it, compressed, for their next war. I disagreed. After such a tablet I might be nourished, but I should have no comfort, no feeling of having eaten anything, whereas, by taking a tablespoonful of whisky every half-hour, I felt neither hungry nor empty. In a crisis, it is how one feels that matters!

News, in Łuck, was as unobtainable as food. Within half an hour I was told by a peasant that the Poles had recaptured certain villages; and by a tank-corps officer, from whom I tried to get petrol, that the Germans were advancing faster than ever. He said: 'Since the third day of the war we have been cut off from Dröbolyecz' (the oil-producing district) 'and we have had no petrol for the tanks. The Germans must have got a lot of them by now.' If the Polish army was short of petrol, so were the Polish

civilians; beyond Luck I began to pass cars, often full of women and children, held up, out of petrol entirely. Fantastic bargains were made. One man sold a big Packard filled with luggage for ten litres of petrol. The only ones who had all the petrol they needed were the government officials; and they used it for cars full of baggage, even while so many others were stranded. The government lorries were a different case, for they were filled with typewriters, archives, and the paraphernalia of administration. Nor did all of them get safely through, for the sun-glare was strong, the drivers tired, the road partly destroyed; a number of bad accidents happened in consequence. As usual, no one but the Germans knew where the Government was making its headquarters.

As soon as I drove into Krzemieniec I saw that the feeling of the place had changed. An alarm sounded while I was coming between the first houses, and the wardens fairly flung themselves in front of my car. The people who put faces out of the doorways were more frightened than they could have been by any ordinary alarm. I strolled about; everyone was taking this raid very seriously, I thought; yet it seemed unlikely that the Germans would bomb a small, unmilitary town which housed all the neutral diplomats. I soon found I was wrong, and why the people were terrified. The afternoon before, a German formation had come over Krzemieniec—which possessed no anti-aircraft battery—had skimmed the house-tops, and had bombed without mercy. In half a minute sixty people died. Because the diplomats were there, this became the *bombardement célèbre* of the war. It was one of Hitler's affronts to the world, meant to daze and stun, to kill incipient opposition by a blow in the face. The poor diplomats did not understand;

but the method has been known to drinkshop bullies for centuries.

I drove on. The main street was blocked, with a bomb-hole in the centre, and the alley I drove through was so narrow and rutty that twice I thought my car was stuck for the night. As I looked about me, I saw that the town had lost its gay appearance. The ballet-set was broken, the gay sugar-stick fronts were cracked, balconies sagged, roofs had been beaten in. Some of the houses were a pile of sticks and stones, where people were still digging for their dead. Most of the bombs had fallen in the centre of the town, on a small slum, where women had been walking and children playing in the street. I got out to look at the ruins, and as I did so another alarm sounded. Everyone in sight rushed to a shelter in a house, and the door closed. I felt that if I were packed there in the darkness, the struggling and the screaming, I should never get out alive, so I climbed back into the car and tried to fix my mind on a detective story which I had found in my tool-box that morning.

When I reached the Embassy the diplomats were away in conference, so I went to look for lodgings and news. My first find was the announcer-in-English of 'Polski Radio,' the Polish B.B.C. He had left Warsaw with the Government and had been sent on with his unit to Lwów. The station in the Ukranian city was out of action now, he said; it had been bombed many times and there had been a great deal of internal sabotage. Yes, I thought, sabotage again. My young friend warned me not to stay in Krzemieniec longer than overnight.

'You may easily get cut off here. The Germans will break through north of Tarnopol. They'll cut the road.'

'And you?'

'I'm off to-night. So will a lot of other people be, you'll see.'

I imagined his agitation to be the result of service at Lwów, whose radio station was one of the favourite targets of the war; but he was more nearly right than I thought at the time. Besides giving me this warning, he found me a bed, a grand bed indeed, until now occupied by the Belgian Minister. There was a private bathroom too; but since the water-supply had stopped some days before, it was provided with a small jug of water from the nearest well.

In the middle of these domesticities, I fell on the most interesting piece of secret diplomacy of the war, one which I afterwards confirmed from British and French sources. Ever since leaving Warsaw, the diplomats had lived close together, and had become almost intimate. In this atmosphere, Francis Biddle, the American Ambassador, had developed great authority; he had become the unquestioned chief of the neutrals. Mr. Biddle had been popular in Warsaw, not only because he was handsome and rich and from an old Virginian family, but because he achieved the end of being at once a diplomat and a member of normal humanity. The Ambassador of the United States was easier to see than a French Consul. He had time to talk to everyone, and with everyone he was on the same informal terms. One evening before the war I myself was at the Biddles' house (one of the most beautiful palaces in Warsaw) when Colonel Beck dropped in for a drink, unannounced. On the flight, Mr. Biddle was the only person consulted by all the Poles and by all his fellow-diplomats. It was therefore natural that the Russian Ambassador should consult him on a point of some delicacy, the day before the air raid on Krzemieniec.

Invited to the Russian Embassy, just opposite the British one, the American Ambassador was shown into the dark room which served his Russian colleague as bedchamber and *salle de réception*. To his surprise he saw, spread on a rather grubby tablecloth, bread and vodka and caviare. Having eaten and drunk, he inquired how his colleague had come by so much food, when other diplomats existed on a little bread and tea. The Russian explained that, being so near the Soviet frontier, he had managed to get food for himself sent across. The reason, the remarkable reason, for the invitation then emerged. Would the American Ambassador inquire from Colonel Beck whether the Polish Government cared to invite the Red Army into Eastern Poland, to keep order and to prevent the Germans from occupying it? Biddle was startled. He pointed out that the Polish Government was unlikely to do any such thing. He personally was unable to take up the proposal officially with Colonel Beck, and would much prefer not to mention it to him, even privately. However, the Polish Foreign Secretary lived only a few yards away; why could not the Russian Ambassador ask him personally?

Later in the day the Russian called at the American Embassy. He had seen Beck, he said, and learnt that there could be no question of the Polish Government asking any help whatever of the Soviets. The Ambassador added that he must now telephone to Moscow, and as this could not be done from Krzemieniec (for international calls were unobtainable) he would be obliged to leave early in the morning for Russia. When would he be back? asked Biddle. That he did not know, nor whether he would return at all; he might have to go some way into Russia to get a connection with Moscow. Next morning at eight, the English

diplomats were surprised by all the Russian cars starting. The archives, baggage and equipment were packed into them, and the whole staff left with the Ambassador. Two hours later came the air raid. It would be interesting to know the connection between these events. In any case, within a week the Red Army was to march into Eastern Poland.

Another story of that day centred on the American Ambassador and the raid. After the bombs had started falling, the diplomats raged. How vile, this bombing of open towns! They hadn't realised what it was like before. Now, hour by hour they grew hotter; until the poorer in spirit lost their nerve and went to their rooms, for fear of saying too much and compromising their neutrality. At last the Papal Nuncio called a meeting of the heads of neutral diplomatic missions, in what had been a netball or a handball or a football field until the authorities dug trenches in it. (The Poles, the British and the French knew nothing of this meeting, nor did they hear of it till some time afterwards.) Mr. Biddle was asked to take the chair, and the Nuncio proposed that all present should send identical telegrams to their governments, protesting, on Christian or humanitarian grounds, against the bombing of civilian populations. At this point in the proceedings there was an air-raid alarm. The diplomats took cover; tail-coats and top-hats rolled together in the dirty trench.

'We crawled out together, when the all-clear siren sounded,' the Swedish Minister told me, 'like dirty and naughty schoolboys, trying to look as though we were not afraid.'

The meeting was recommenced. After various forms of words had been suggested, one seemed to have general approval. Mr. Biddle read it to the group, making a short

speech, expressing the hope that they could act unanimously. In the event, there were two adverse votes: Switzerland and Bulgaria. One can understand and forgive the second; Bulgaria's position is difficult though perhaps not more difficult than that of certain others. Switzerland, on the other hand, is the home of the Red Cross, the habitat of the League. Switzerland leads the world in well-advertised good works. Indeed, the Swiss now tell us that only neutrals can do relief work in war-time, and that they are the only neutrals equipped to do it. Just our money is needed, and that of the Americans. I was glad to hear that Ambassador Biddle half lost his temper and said words no diplomat should. Among the Swedes and the Dutch, too, I heard no praise of the most pharisaical nation on earth.

After all this, it seemed time to look up my friends at the Embassy again. Soon after I arrived, there came the sound of 'planes, and I saw how the outlook of the Embassy staff had changed. Were they German 'planes? There was a little rush for the steps leading to the air-raid shelter. Were they Polish? Young Hankey poked his sharp nose through the door, looking up, his dog bumbling behind him.

'Robin, come here, Robin, I say!' shouted the Ambassador, as though Hankey were a small dog himself, sniffing something unfortunate. Yes, the 'planes must be German, and everyone save Sir Howard ran down the steps. Then they turned out to be Polish, after all.

The Ambassador stalked off, and the others settled down to hear my story. It was time for the black-out, and we sat in the archivist's room, his débris around us, a poor light overhead. I produced my last bottle of gin. What should we drink it with? Mrs. Norton provided cherry jam. Clifford Norton's face is clear in my mind, lighted against

the dark corner of the room, tilted back in his characteristic way, then down, as I told of the refugees dying under the German machine-guns. I confirmed what they had heard, but they knew, as I did not, that the B.B.C. had suppressed most of the accounts of these deliberate killings of civilians. 'The Chamberlain government wants to avoid a wave of indignation,' I thought, when I heard. 'It might sweep it into active measures to support the Poles. It might destroy this tacit bargain, to let our allies suffer without reprisal, so long as London's skin keeps safe.' We discussed the sending of telegrams to England. I myself sent three, of which none arrived; perhaps they never left Poland—or perhaps our own censor never let them through. At that time the diplomats were very moved; I pictured them addressing meetings of the Labour Party, telling the story of how a government ignored reports of civilians bombed, and even tried to prevent news of it spreading. Now they have no doubt calmed down, and found a hundred reasons for our doing what we did.

All this time I guessed at something more in the air. I felt honoured when the Ambassador invited me to a conference with the others. There was news, he said, of a rapid German thrust toward Tarnopol (I thought of my young man from 'Polski Radio'). It would not be proper for him to leave until the Polish Foreign Office did so, and he would keep Norton and Hankey with him; to these Mrs. Norton and the archivist were added; the rest were to leave. This decision made them short of cars, and the offer of mine was accepted immediately. Some people wished to start at once, and make the journey by night, but I was thankful to see the vote go the other way; though even five-thirty a.m. was too soon for me. I was given as pas-

sengers the Consul-General from Warsaw, whom I knew well; and the Third Secretary. Instead of my ex-ministerial bed, I was to have one with Sir Howard's Secretary, a charming girl, so that I might be available for the morning. Neither food nor sheets nor even water was available. The servants had been so scared by the raid that they had run to the woods; they only ventured back in daylight, and refused to stay in town after dark. When I was awakened at four o'clock I would have given almost anything for a cup of tea; but there was only cold and bustle, and a white, wet mist. Outside, the Ambassador stamped up and down the pavement in his dressing-gown, growling: 'Now get off! Get along!' unceasingly.

I packed in white-haired Mr. Savery. I could not have chosen better company; Frank Savery was the most cultured of the Embassy circle. His collections, his Persian pottery, his oriental paintings (which he would seldom show), his library—all had been left behind in Warsaw. I said a word of sympathy.

'One has hardly had time to think of those things,' he said simply. I did not, of course, know then that these officials were unlikely to receive any compensation from the Government for what they had lost. Mr. Savery's losses were not only material. As Consul and Consul-General in Warsaw he had, during twenty years, made himself the best-known Englishman in Poland, relinquishing promotion to stay in the country of which he had grown so fond. He spoke Polish as well as many Poles, and knew more than most of them about their literature. As both a Roman Catholic and a man of culture, he was accepted in the inner circle of the aristocracy. Not only did he 'know everyone' in this sense, as well as their family history and relationships:

he was said to 'know everyone' of interest, down to the mayors of most of the substantial towns in Poland. To Warsaw society, Mr. Savery's lunches redeemed the British reputation for hospitality, for the Ambassador entertained but little. To the British colony, he was 'Uncle Savery'; to the poorest British subject or Palestinian Jew he was available, sympathetic, and full of help. Now all this activity was over.

We had driven off first. It was miserable going. The mist made the windscreen-wiper useless, and combined with dust to form a mud-pie on the glass; every half-hour or so I had to get out with a rag and rub it clear. We were driving so blind that at one moment we bounced over a great chunk of stone without seeing it. Twenty kilometres of the way were over a sandy track across the fields, and I was not amused when the Consul's Polish driver went by, two wheels off the road, sending a sandstorm over me. Still, it was by that kind of driving that he had got us out of Katowice and Cracow.

We arrived in Tarnopol at breakfast-time. Two of the cafés were open, one serving a brown liquid which passed for coffee but tasted earthy. It was our business to find the headquarters of the British Military Mission—the group of officers sent out to advise the Polish General Staff. Naturally, the Mission's whereabouts was a secret from all (except the Germans) and it took us a good deal of time to run it to earth. At last we got there; it was an unimpressive villa at the end of a vile road, and the General was smoking his after-breakfast pipe in the garden. While he and Mr. Savery talked, I was taken in to breakfast by the Military Attaché, another friend from Warsaw. What a breakfast! Toast, marmalade, real coffee.

'Yes please, yes please,' I said, like a small, greedy girl, each time more was offered. Presently, in came the General, and went on talking in front of me. I was startled to hear him say that Sir Howard Kennard and his staff had already followed us, leaving Krzemieniec at eight. Things must be bad, for it seemed that Colonel Beck and the remaining officials had left too. The General talked on, confirming the worst of the rumours current about the military position. With his drooping white moustache and a black shade over one eye, he looked like a Japanese war-idol; but it did not seem that he and his five dozen officers had done much to affect the issue. From the first, the Mission had been on the run. Among their luggage was wireless equipment, worth many thousand pounds, through which they were to keep in contact with the Polish command; it was never even set up, and it had finally to be destroyed before the party escaped into Roumania. Not only were they out of touch with the Poles, but after the French Military Mission had been particularly severely bombed in Luck, the British Mission did not let even its French colleagues know its whereabouts. In spite of their caution, the officers' whereabouts was always signalled by the German espionage, and they, too, were bombed incessantly, and often chased with machine-gun fire as well. A civilian attached to the Mission afterwards described to me the scene. The bullets would be flipping the dust ahead of the cars, while everyone begged the General to stop and take cover, and the old V.C. snorted: 'The something, something sons of so-and-so's! *Drive on!*'

We had next to motor on, to the main body of the Mission, sixteen kilometres away. On our way through the town I saw a compact blue figure that I knew; it was Colonel Josef

Żółtaszek, the Silesian police-chief. There was only time for a pause, a word of pleasure at seeing him safe. I was to hear a great deal of his adventures later on. The main part of the Mission we found eventually in a large mansion. The sentry was unimpressed by diplomatic credentials, but we convinced him at last; and, passing him, arrived at a grand flight of steps. A group of young British officers smoking on the porch; they ran down the steps in their pleasure at seeing fresh faces and at the possibility of news. They brought us out of the heat into large bare rooms, with camp furniture. Of beer at least they had plenty, and we drank and gossiped. When an air raid interrupted us I was glad to find the military had learned (as the civilians never did) that one is better outdoors than in buildings. We went into a spinney near the house, and smoked our cigarettes until the all-clear sounded.

The young officers were restless and bored. In the middle of a war they could neither fight, nor even know what fighting was being done. A retreat was going on, and they were no more than baggage. Legs straddled, puffing smoke up into the trees, they damned and speculated and grumbled. Perhaps it was fortunate the Poles had given them few servants, so that they were forced to cut fuel, draw water, polish boots and buttons. They had nothing else to do, and nothing at all to read.

I was enjoying myself, out there under the trees, opposite the great deserted mansion; but the Third Secretary had word of a diplomatic lunch in Zaleszczyki and was clawing at our party to get away. I must at least let them fill my petrol tank for me, the officers said. Reflecting that their own lives depended on their petrol reserve, I was grateful. Soon after we reached the main road again, my car began

to show signs of breaking down. Each time she took a bump, the flow of petrol would stop. I could do nothing with her, and my passengers were of no use with cars. At this point my old friend the Consul came to my rescue again. Thanks to his driver, we had reached our destination, Zaleszczyki, in the early part of the morning. He had made arrangements for the Embassy, and then, worried by our non-arrival, he had returned thirty or forty kilometres. After reporting to the Commercial Attaché, whom he met on the road, he had pushed on, looking for us. The Third Secretary, as the only 'real' diplomat there, was on fire to attend that lunch. I, as a journalist, was keen to be there too.

'Right-ho,' said the Consul, with his usual good nature, 'you take my bus. We'll fix yours up and bring her along.'

So we left him, in that soupy white dust, with his driver and my disabled car.

VIII

SOUTH-EAST CORNER

OUR dash to Zaleszczyki for the diplomatic lunch was wasted, so far as food was concerned. We found the restaurant, which opened into a garden, where the diplomats sat at small tables on the green. There was no sign of a meal. As we waited, Mr. Savery pointed out the celebrities to me. At a table behind us sat three or four Polish writers of the Left, who had been in disgrace in the early days of the Beck government but had gradually come into favour as the policy of cordiality toward Germany had changed to fear and hatred. I noticed the absence of the senior Polish officials. Then there was a step behind us.

'Is the Ambassador not with you?' asked the American Ambassador.

'Not with us. He intended to stay in Krzemieniec. We've had word that he's left now.'

'Indeed. I left last night and made an all-night trip down here. It was a dreadful journey. The driver kept losing himself, and we didn't reach Zaleszczyki until dawn. When we arrived, nothing was open.'

Ambassador Biddle, I reflected, had certainly never known what discomfort was before. He seemed to have enjoyed a row. I wondered if his wife had done so. Mrs. Biddle, who was said to be one of the richest women in America, belonged to that class whose fur coats, orchids and voices underline the concept of plutocracy.

'When the Mayor's office opened at eight,' the Ambassador went on, 'I went there for lodgings. The hotels are

impossible, and there's not a private house free in the town. The Mayor found us a large villa outside, but we've still no food.' He looked toward the kitchens, but no sign came. The talk switched to the war, and the Ambassador gave an exposition of the tactics of General Sosnkowski in this region. He admired the General's use of flanking and turning movements against the mobile German forces. He thought him the hope of the Polish defence, and expected (rightly enough) a Polish rally in the south-east region.

All the Ambassador's diagrams, drawn in the dust with his stick, could not make me forget my hunger. Long after he had returned to his table, we waited on. Every few minutes another car-load of British officials came. They all sat together and discussed their arrangements. The whereabouts of Sir Howard, how to come by lodgings and food, the war, how far we were from the frontier, whether we should be leaving Poland or staying; the talk bounced to and fro. Then the meal was brought: two small, high-smelling sausages for eight people, at our table. I was politely offered them, but they needed a stronger palate than mine. The last thing I saw as I left the restaurant was the eight officials, passing the lumps of withered, orange-coloured meat and avoiding one another's eye.

I wandered into the town. Zaleszczyki sits inside the right fin of the forked tail of Poland, as Kutu, where I was to go later, does of the fin opposite. The people are not Polish at all. Even the heavy Silesian, with his blurred limbs and German accent, is a Pole essentially; he has the Pole's fidelity and romantic ferocity (murders of brutal foremen or mine-directors are common in Silesian industry). There is the same national quality in the moujik peasants beyond Warsaw—a slack-built people, with the unformed

faces of the illiterate. I had often seen them travelling home from the capital, after a three-days' journey to sell their produce, sleeping in their boat-like waggons, and leaving the horse to wander anyhow along the road. Sometimes a girl would hunch on the driving-seat, sheltering a candle in a bottle for light. More often, they would have no lamp at all, as they creaked through the night across the north-eastern plains. They made me think of Polish romantic painting, and even justified, in a way, its æsthetic atrocities. These were Poles. But the dark little people in Zaleszczyki were too gay, with their clean limbs and brilliant plumage. They were too quick-moving and inquisitive. Everywhere one stopped, child-beggars clustered. Ethnographically, I suppose they are a mixture of Roumanian with Ukrainian, and perhaps Russian too. I felt myself among a people untouched by the war.

This attitude of detachment was to continue, even when fifteen thousand refugees were jammed into this last corner of escape against the frontier, and had eaten everything in every shop and restaurant. The little people cocked their heads at the strangers, and went on getting food, somehow, in their own houses. They remained clean and small and bright, and belonging to another world.

I turned into a restaurant labelled 'Café Klub.' It was hard to make myself understood. After some consultation, a girl came forward, a Jewess, quiet and smart. I spoke German. She brushed that aside.

She said, with a sweet smile, 'I 'ear there's somethink wrong. Wot did yer wonter order?' The accent was the most beloved Whitechapel.

'Could I have some lunch, do you think?'

'Of course. These people don't know wot they're a

doin' of. Hier! Fritz!

 She gave an order in bad German.

'I cawn't learn Powlish,' she said aside, 'even though I am married ter one.'

Married to a Pole, out on this frontier. She still carried the cocky smartness of the Mile End Road. A few weeks later I was to see her in the British Legation in Bucharest, obtaining a visa to return to her parents.

'Can they support you?' asked the official.

'Course they kin!' she barked. 'They're in *business*, they are.'

I was happy that, even though she was no longer a British subject, under the absurd law of nationality, a kindly regulation allowed her to go home. I wondered what kind of audience she would have, in the Mile End Road. Perhaps it would compensate a little.

After my lunch I strolled back, to find out what arrangements had been made for lodgings. Everyone, save a few heads of missions, was to be billeted in a military hospital on the hill; so I went up to inquire for a room there too.

'I'm afraid I'm not a diplomat or the wife of one,' I said to the little official who seemed to be in charge of lodgings. 'Only a journalist. But I should like a room.'

'A journalist? For an English paper?'

'The *Daily Telegraph*.' I thought he was going to throw his arms round me.

'Splendid! Splendid!' he kept repeating. 'You are the only Anglo-Saxon journalist who has stayed with us. I thought you had all run away to Roumania.'

'And can you find me a bed?'

'Of course we can. It is most important for us to be helpful to journalists. Here is a ticket for your room.' I was delighted to find myself with the Ambassador's

Secretary again, my room-companion from Krzemieniec. From our window we looked across the River Dniester, invisible in its valley, to the blunt hills of Roumania.

We strolled down to look at the hospital. Inside iron gates, with a sentry on guard, the huge building covered three sides of a rectangle. A walk ran round the edge of the grounds, edged with flower-beds and fruit trees. Now the beds were crushed, loaded with diplomatic cars, tilted and parked at angles. As one walked along, their little flags made a perfect Lord Mayor's Show. Some of the cars were camouflaged or mud-bedaubed, on others the chauffeurs were raising the persian-cat gloss again.

On the lawn, diplomats, legation clerks, embassy servants and chauffeurs, Polish officials and soldiers, were interweaving vaguely. I stood amused. Asiatics, Frenchmen, Scandinavians, Latin Americans, Russians, Anglo-Saxons, Balkan Slavs and Baltic northerners; all talked, walked, gesticulated. It soon turned out that not all were diplomats or their servants. Some of the Chinese and Japanese were journalists; but for the rest, no one could find good reason for their presence. The Poles realised they had let in outsiders, and began giving us passes, to use going and coming.

I saw a woman, heavily bandaged, being helped out of a car. It was the Italian Consul's wife, who had been wounded at Krzemieniec. The neutral diplomats were still shaken by that raid. The hospital was an excellent target, they pointed out to each other, and it looked like a barracks. On the other hand, would the Germans loose a bomb which might easily land in Roumania? The neutrals were disinclined to risk it; having come so far, they longed to go further, and cross the Dniester. Some were restrained by personal considerations.

‘What will my position be?’ said the Swedish Minister. ‘In Poland, I am the Minister. But how can I be Minister to Poland when I’m in Roumania?’

‘But, my dear Minister,’ I said, ‘the Polish Government itself will have to leave if this goes on.’

‘Do you think the Roumanians will let them go on being a Government there?’ This was unusual, even for the vaguest diplomat in Warsaw.

‘They can’t. They’re neutrals,’ I explained. ‘But perhaps the British or, more likely still, the French will let the Poles set up there.’ He brightened.

‘I don’t want to go back to Sweden,’ he said. ‘I’m too old for another post, and I’d just sit at a desk until I retired.’

Not everyone was selfish or defeatist.

‘These will not be your quarters long,’ said a senior Polish officer. ‘We’re going to have a big military hospital here.’

‘Why here?’

‘This will be the centre for our rally. We are concentrating for a blow near Tarnopol. Then we shall hold this last peninsula at all costs, and from it reconquer our country.’

‘Have you sufficient forces?’

‘Yes, so far as this sector is concerned. But, of course, our losses will be heavy. We are a kind of advance guard, and not many of us will come through. So we shall need this,’ he waved his hand at the hospital and smiled. ‘We were to hear more of General Sosnkowski’s rally soon.’

Just then I saw an old friend, Brown, Chancery servant from the Warsaw Embassy. Brown was standing on the Embassy lorry, sturdy and effective in the loose tide of diplomats in charge of the unloading.

'Hi, Mr. Brown,' I called. 'How did you manage about eating?' The conversation always started with food, I found, as it does with the weather in England. He looked wise.

'Thank you, Miss. Brought ours with us on the 'bus. Can't trust these people. Promise you anything.' Brown had been in Warsaw for sixteen years, having come out with one of the early British missions, married a Polish wife, and stayed. It was he who had driven the Embassy lorry across Poland, loaded, not only with the Chancery equipment but with the bedding, clothing, uniforms and sporting guns, the whisky, champagne and other wines, the tinned delicacies, Ryvita, soap, the personal servants and all the many other things without which diplomats cannot manage, even in war-time. Brown seemed to enjoy the job. It was a change from answering the telephone, collecting the bag, anticipating the Ambassador's wishes. Still, like everyone else, he had lost all his possessions in Warsaw. Presumably he too has received no compensation.

Directed by Brown, I found the room where British officials were lodged. It was a cross between a ward and a dormitory, with iron beds in two rows, each with its standard night-table of metal, and one washstand for five. More exalted persons than these slept together in Zaleszczyki. For the first time in history, six Ministers slept in one room.

'Well,' said the Dutch Minister, 'I'm going to sleep. I shall leave my cyphers at the side of my bed. I trust no one will look at them.'

In the British room, everyone was sitting and standing around, with the black box of cyphers standing like an ikon on a minute white table in the centre.

'What news of the Ambassador?' I asked.

'He hasn't turned up yet. Inquiries have been made at the villa kept for him. He's not there. No-one knows anything about him.'

'Can I help?'

'If you would drive me, I think we might make inquiries on the road,' said Mr. Savery. We ran here and there, to bureaux and petrol-stations and police-posts on the road, the Consul-General asking questions in his fine Polish. Then we returned for supper in the makeshift canteen, where by eight-thirty all food was gone. The conversation was all of Sir Howard's whereabouts. His Secretary and I were wakened early in the night, to hear that he was 'really' lost. By the morning, the affair had become serious. The bridge at Tarnopol might be cut, blown up by the Poles on the approach of the enemy. In that case, the Ambassador's party would be unable to get through. I went off to try and send the story to my newspaper.

I came by the room later that morning. Two or three harassed-looking people were sitting outside. I tapped and went in, and the Consul-General came close after me.

'Excuse me,' he said. 'Some people to see me.'

'Shall I be in the way?'

'Not at all.'

The first caller was brought in, and poured out her story: something about a son in England, and getting a visa to go there. The Consul-General leaned forward, beaming, and began to advise her, pointing his spectacles, head a little on one side. The bare dormitory disappeared. Behind his head were bookshelves of works on Polish literature and Oriental art, on his feet were carpet slippers. The room was the British Consulate in Warsaw. The tide of advice, exhortation,

warning, slipped from him, as it had been doing for twenty years. It came to an end, and she went; and we were back once more in a cold dormitory, on the colder frontier.

Before lunch, news came of the Ambassador. Colonel Beck and the Foreign Office had settled in Kutu, a village, as I said, on the opposite fin of the tail of Poland. Thither the Ambassador and his French colleague had gone. The other diplomats were furious at this 'favoritism'; but we found out later that the Government had made a last-minute change (its plans having, as usual, become known to the Germans) after the bulk of the Corps had left Krzemieniec. The Commercial Counsellor decided to send a liaison to establish contact, and it was arranged that the Consul and the Third Secretary should go.

As I was leaving the building again, I was hailed from a window. There was my colleague, Patrick Maitland, of The Times. I had a pang of rage. Personally, I had regretted missing my journalist friends in Warsaw, but it had been a great professional advantage. I had paid for it with a pretty hard time, while they had enjoyed themselves in Bucharest, sending off a good story every day. Now, hearing of our arrival, they had taken 'plane to Cernăuți, and had come thence in a swarm of taxis to the frontier. As I went in again, the Consul-General was pouring out the adventures of the diplomats, what radio stations had been bombed, and where the Germans were believed to be.

I choked down my selfish ill-humour and greeted Maitland, of whom I was fond. A tall and romantic young man, from the start of the war he had dramatised himself in a way which was a joy to us all. He had gone into a shop one day, dressed normally. He came out in breeches, high

boots, and a russet suède jacket; a heavy black leather coat over all. It might have been Hollywood's idea of a costume for the coming Finnish campaign. On one arm he wore a band with the Union Jack, on the other, one with *The Times*, London, in red letters. Had we really been going to spend the winter in the Pripet Marshes, instead of in hotels in the Balkan capitals, we should have admired Maitland's forethought; as it was, we admired the way he wore his outfit, in spite of the warm weather.

In a few minutes, my *Telegraph* colleague, Hugh Carleton Greene, arrived. I opened a bottle of the French Consul's champagne, and out of tin mugs we had the drink we had promised each other when we should meet in Warsaw. That seemed a month ago. Greene was very pleased with life. After eight years in Berlin, he had come to Warsaw, just in time for his first job as war correspondent, and the paper was featuring him enormously. His only trouble was one perpetual with him: he is six foot six, and can find no girl tall enough to dance with him. The only other journalist to reach the hospital before I left it was the other woman correspondent, Sonia Tamara. A White Russian refugee with a French passport, she had somehow secured the job of correspondent to the *Chicago Tribune*. I left her in her usual grave agony as to whether the stories she received were authentic enough.

Meanwhile, Greene had been urging me away. His conscience could not rest till my own story should be filed.

'But there is my refugee,' I objected. 'A Czech Jew whom we brought out of Katowice. He has no visa yet for Roumania.'

'You keep your bad habits,' said Greene, grinning. 'For Christ's sake come along now. You can get him a visa in

Cernăuți.' There was a tap, and the Czech Jew came in. At Katowice he had been the model of the 'underground' political worker. He dressed in soft blue suits and loose, white collars. With his low voice and young, fair hair, he might still have been a law student. Only when you came near him you felt the absorption of a man who has worked with death at his ear. Now, he seemed not only small but sharpened with anxiety. The days that had been activity and mild adventure for me had been a period of waiting for him. With nothing to do, and the Nazis moving up behind, his nerve had gone.

'I sink it is dangerous here,' he said. 'I sink peoples are all leaving. Te Roumanian Consul vil give me no visum. I am not 'appy, Mees 'Ollingvort.'

'I'll come to-morrow with your visa. Pull yourself together. You're not afraid?'

'No, no. . . .' He turned away doubtfully. I saw that his hands were shaking. Poor little man. We were to meet again more dramatically.

Greene and I walked down to the long wooden bridge which crosses the Dniester, at the other side of which his taxi was waiting. My own car had no international papers. We must have looked an odd sight, Greene hugging a huge non-portable typewriter, and I my dirty pillow-case full of clothing. The Roumanian customs post had grave doubts, and would by no means let us by. Fortunately, at this moment the Consul came by, with the young diplomat in tow.

'What's the trouble?' he called.

'These people won't let us by.'

'Just a moment.' Out he jumped, and buttonholed the chief of the Post. At first he seemed unsuccessful. Then

the two turned aside, and I saw a pound note slip between their fingers.

‘Das muss nicht sein!’ said the Roumanian, with grave sorrow. ‘That’s not right.’ And he moved us by.

IX

THE LAST CAPITAL OF POLAND

THE military situation which I had to report was fairly critical. It appeared that there has been a break-through in the south-east, and that the Germans were marching on Tarnopol, leaving Lwów untaken, the centre of heavy fighting on their left flank. More fighting was reported between Lublin and Lwów, where the forces from north and south were closing to a junction at Brest-Litovsk. When they met, Eastern Poland would be cut off from the West. From the other side of the country came word that Warsaw was almost surrounded. General Bartonowski, from the Corridor, was cutting his way eastwards via Kutno to rejoin the Warsaw command. The date was September 14th.

My report sent off from Cernăuți, there was not much to do but to make good the hunger of four or five days. Later on, the liaison party turned up from Kutu, confirming that the Ambassador was there and intended to stay, but (being cut off from even a telephone) was pretty isolated. Greene and I decided to call on him next day. For that evening, we all went on to a dance-bar. It was of the *botte de nuit* kind that the Roumanians love—small, and full of black paint and mirrors, against which the blondes nodded their plumes. The cabaret was lively, and the Roumanian officers sitting round made a suitable background, with their musical-comedy uniforms and faces. It was good to be somewhere warm and gay and full of light again. It was very good. Then why didn't I feel more cheerful, I wondered? There was a chill, a weight, a feeling of vague

guilt. I found that I was calling up the faces of the peasants as they had fled so desperately before the machine guns. How sentimental.

In the morning we learned that the whole party from Zaleszczyki had arrived. I was more than ever concerned for my refugee, and hurried round to the Consulate. While I was waiting there, the Czech Jew himself walked in, dressed in clothes that had been soaked not long before.

'How do you come here?' I asked, astonished.

'I walk.'

'How, walked?'

'Ven everyone go, I sink the Germans come soon. You go too. I have no passport. So I walk across river.'

'You waded the Dniester? You didn't think I would keep my word and return for you?'

'I not know.' He looked uncomfortable, yet not self-respecting enough to be embarrassed. He was a hunted animal.

I sent him away to have a bath, and put him out of my mind.

It was time to leave for an interview with the Ambassador: so Greene, Sonia Tamara and I started for the frontier. Almost at once a police post held us up.

'Where are you going?'

'The frontier.'

'That's not allowed.'

'But we're journalists. We're going to see the British Ambassador.'

'But——'

'But——'

Sonia Tamara's Russian brought us through. A few minutes, and a military post.

'Where are you going?'

So the question prolonged itself. Our chief trouble was with the illiterate Roumanian troopers, who spoke no language but their own patois, and tried to read our credentials upside down. Fortunately, beyond a certain pitch of exasperation, one begins to laugh. When we reached the frontier the officer of the guard was at lunch. No, the soldiers had no idea when he would return. No, we could not pass the frontier. No, we could not go to the officer. We drove to the local police post: the chief of police was at lunch. No, the constables had no idea. The only thing was to find one or other of the officials, and we began a tour of local restaurants, each a little more soup-stained and fly-blown than the last. Sonia Tamara's Russian purred and vibrated, and Greene produced the German which malicious people said was better than his English.

'Excuse me, are you by any chance. . . .' they approached each important personage. Presently the good Samaritan, who keeps one's faith still flickering, rose and declared himself. Leaving his lunch, he walked us under a blazing sun to the restaurant where our quarry were feeding together. They were extremely embarrassed, for in the cause of comfort they had unbuttoned their uniforms and removed a good part of them. A butterfly is a poor thing without its wings. They exclaimed that the frontier was closed.

'But we are journalists. We have to see the British Ambassador at Kut.''

'How long will you be there?'

'An hour or so. We are coming straight back.'

The Commandant had the Roumanian kindliness, that curious sweetness which seems to mark corrupt peoples, contrasting with the grim and comparatively honest Poles.

'Very well,' he said. 'I will give instructions. But you must fill in the forms. I shall ask you to leave your money here, too.' And after numberless form-fillings and the surrender of our cash (I counted mine carefully), he went with us to instruct the post on the frontier.

The Dniester bridge at Kutý was still longer than the Zaleszczyki one, and as ramshackle as the first was new-built. A great many of the slats had been knocked out of the wooden footway, so that I had to lengthen my stride to avoid the jagged gaps of river at my feet. At one point, metal plates were let in for some purpose, and sank lower than the footway. Greene slipped and plunged like a camel. Perhaps for want of draught-water, there were no barges on the river now, though the sawn wood they had brought still stood in piles, like a child's toy bricks. The Dniester ran low; I reflected that a river which the little Czech Jew could wade would not be much of a military obstacle. Supposing the Germans overran Poland, as now began to seem probable, would they stop at the Roumanian frontier? The Bukovina had been a part of the Austrian Empire, of which 'Greater Germany' thought itself the heir. Roumanian resistance had been dealt with easily enough by Austro-German forces in the Great War, and judging by what I had seen and heard, it had not improved much since. If the Germans chose to drive straight through, I did not think they would have any serious opposition.

We reached the Polish side and spent a pleasant moment in the customs-bungalow, with its big window for observing illegal river-crossings. The inspector was charming, even sending back for our Roumanian taxi to give us transport, for Kutý was half-a-mile on. I was to see the frontier in very different circumstances next evening. For the moment,

Kuty seemed unconscious of the war. Tree-lined, with white wooden houses, it was almost like a small town in America. People were shopping, pushing prams, cycling, going about the ordinary business of the day. Even in the cobbled square or along the wide main street there were fewer soldiers than in Roumania. The shops were open and normally stocked, and there seemed no shortage of food. At the 'Embassy'—a three-roomed doctor's house—we were met by the archivist.

'The Ambassador?'

'He's at lunch. But you'll easily find him. At the restaurant down the street.'

'May we go through the garden?'

'Of course. And there are some awfully good apples which you might try as you pass.'

Munching like cattle, we went on.

The restaurant, we were given to understand, was the best in Kuty. We passed it three times without knowing it was one at all. Then, passing through the shop, where bottles and bits of cheese and flies shared the counter, we came into a back room with one table. The cloth was dirty and most of the food had been eaten. There the Embassy party sat, with a number of Poles who rose and left at our coming. Sir Howard had never before seemed pleased to see one. I thought how charming he could be. He sat me down at his side, where I ate bread and tomatoes with my fingers. The three diplomats had been isolated together for what must have seemed a long time, and they were a little tired of one another's company. They had read all their books, they were weary of struggling with their wireless, and they had not seen an English paper since the war began. Their knowledge of events in Europe was less than

that of the suburban citizen over his tea-pot and marmalade. They begged for news, books, newspapers, as well as for petrol; they had hardly enough of the last for the half-mile to the frontier. We told them what we knew, and promised to come back with supplies next day.

We all strolled back to the Embassy, talking. The Ambassador had not known, of course, of the diplomats leaving Zaleszczyki, which made his mission the last on Polish soil. The French Ambassador, Monsieur Noël, was cautious enough to spend most of his time in Cernăuți, where there was food and no bombs, though he went to Kutu every day. Sir Howard declared that so long as there was a Polish government on Polish soil, he would remain. His only anxiety for his own party was that they had no Roumanian visas. He had thought it improper to get them before, and now that he needed them to secure his retreat, the Roumanian Legation had left Poland and there was no one left to issue them.

As we were talking, a young officer in mufti came in, en route for Bucarest with messages from the Military Mission. He brought good news. The Polish counter-attack was developing, and for the first time the Germans were being pushed back in this sector. This had improved Polish morale. Civilian morale was also much better, because there had been no bombing for three days. Better than all, it had begun to rain. The succession of warm autumn days had seemed endless, keeping the soil hard-baked and the river-beds empty, providing no obstacle against the German tanks and cars and motor supply trains, which softer earth would have held fast. Now the weather had broken. Supplies for the German army, whose lines of communication were now fairly busy, would be bogged and held up.

At last the enemy would be slowed down; the Polish raiding tactics could be effective. Marshal Smigly-Rydz had taken over the combined command, and was directing it from Łuck. The man whose nickname meant 'lightning' would know how to profit by the weather.

Meantime, at the Embassy, the talk turned on atrocity stories.

'In Lublin I heard of the German raiders dropping bags of poisoned sweets for the children,' I said.

'I don't believe it for a moment,' answered Hankey.

'I was told it officially. Besides, I did see paper things dropped by the 'planes, and I did see children being sick afterwards.'

'Did you meet a case of poisoning?'

'No. But a lot of mothers swore that their children were ill after eating sweets picked up in the road.'

I had sent this particular story to the *Daily Telegraph* as one of the more possible tales—and I was to hear later that a weekly had made it the text of a sermon against atrocity-mongering!

'Have you heard the one about the crucifixes treated with acid to blister people's hands?' asked Hankey.

'Yes. I heard that in Cracow, in Lublin and again in Łuck. It was very persistent. But I could never find a case or a witness of it.'

'I think it was circulated by the Poles to keep up the peasants' courage. That isn't very easy. Like the tale of poison gas.'

'I have met Polish officers who swear that gas was used, to their knowledge, against certain villages.'

I thought to myself that no atrocity tales could compare with the massacres of peasants I had seen.

Greene struck in with the rather silly story of the girl pilot. This universal rumour maintained that all the worst bombing was done by a girl, and graphic descriptions circulated of a 'pure Aryan' beauty, who was at the same time a flying ace. I was sure that German women would make as capable pilots as English ones; but I thought it most unlikely that at this stage of the war the Germans would have been using women. However, many journalists believed it.

We left the Embassy to call on the Polish Foreign Office. This was a small farmhouse, standing against the road. Here some thirty officials were working in various rooms, while in a byre across the muddy yard six cows waited to be milked, lowing above the clatter of the typewriters. Colonel Beck was absent, having gone inland to Kosów, where the rest of the Government was installed. So we talked with one of the Under-Secretaries, who was tremendously excited over the Polish victories and the rainfall. I really believed that at this moment the most pessimistic of the Poles believed that the tide of war had turned against the enemy. It was an atrocious irony; for the date was September 16th, and in twenty-four hours Poland would no longer exist.

X

FINIS POLONIAE

[SEPTEMBER 17TH—18TH]

ON September 17th, at nine a.m. Sir Howard Kennard's telephone rang, in Kutý. It was Colonel Beck, who urgently requested the Ambassador to go round and see him immediately. Sir Howard had no car available. Neither had the Foreign Minister, but he sent round a youth with a motor-bicycle and side-car to convey Sir Howard to the farm where the Foreign Office was established. Sir Howard had never before been bumped along in a side-car, and the folding in of his long legs was a problem. Colonel Beck greeted him.

'My dear Ambassador,' he said, 'I must tell you that the Russian forces have crossed our frontier and are marching into the country. There will be a complete and speedy breakdown. I advise you to leave immediately.'

Sir Howard thanked the Foreign Secretary. He packed his belongings, for the last time on that long exodus from Poland, and left with his staff for the Roumanian frontier.

On September 17th, at about twelve noon, the Military Attaché to the American Embassy at Warsaw was motoring between Tarnopol and Zaleszczyki. Suddenly he came up with an enormous sixty-ton tank.

'I wondered,' he said afterwards, 'how on earth the French had managed to get these new tanks into Poland.'

He got out of his car and went over to look at it, as it rumbled slowly forward. As he got near, the upper deck of the tank opened, and a soldier's head popped out. He wore a curious flat cap, on which were the star, the hammer and

sickle. Major Colborne got into his car again and drove away.

At some time on that morning, my old friend Colonel Żółtaszek was sitting in Tarnopol, after working all night. He had marched, at the head of his police, across Poland. Now he was in temporary command here. An orderly interrupted him.

‘Beg pardon, sir. Radio message that the Russians have crossed the frontier in force.’

‘Crossed? You mean invaded Poland?’

‘No, sir. Message says no fighting. Russian forces moving in a peaceable manner.’

The Russians must be coming to the rescue of Poland. Colonel Żółtaszek hurried out to tell his officers. With this news coming on top of their own military recovery, the Poles felt that the desperate game was saved. In a few hours they were to learn that, on the contrary, it was lost irretrievably.

At about ten-thirty on the morning of September 17th I wandered out of my hotel in Cernăuți, and saw at once that something must be wrong. People were bunched together in groups all round the square. The narrower streets were filled, and pavement corners impassable. I edged into a group.

‘What is it? What has happened?’

‘The Russians have invaded Poland.’

I raced back to the hotel with my news.

‘Nonsense,’ said Greene and the other journalists.

By noon, confirmation came, with stories of the welcome given to the Red Army men as saviours from the German invader. There were unconfirmed rumours of an Ukrainian rising. Russia, it already seemed clear, had come in to take

the territory up to the 'Curzon line,' which had once been half-promised at the Peace Conference. Were the Russians justified in seizing them now? We asked ourselves the question.

People have been asking that question ever since. Writing after these events, but before the Russo-Finnish war, Mr. D. N. Pritt has made the Russian case with all the authority of a first-class lawyer. The Russians, he points out, were not seriously asked for their help against Germany. Whereas Mr. Chamberlain himself had been to Munich, to Moscow he only sent Mr. Strang, 'a minor Foreign Office official.' Mr. Pritt maintains that the Russians were serious in their negotiations, and had no secret dealings with the Germans so long as there was hope of their success. But what were the Russian terms? Mr. Pritt believes that they asked for the lands up to the 'Curzon line,' which they eventually took by force. He thinks that the British should have pressed the Poles to make this cession, just as they had so often pressed them to conciliate the Germans in the west. The point is arguable. It is probable that the Poles would have paid the necessary price for German 'protection,' rather than agree to this. Had they agreed, however, and had they had Russian help from the start, I believe they might have held the Germans until British and French help arrived. On the other hand, the bargain would so have weakened Polish prestige that Russia might have taken what she wanted at once, without waiting to give the help promised, or, indeed, for the war to begin.

Thus far, two opinions are possible. But when Mr. Pritt goes on to advance a 'lawyer's argument,' that Russia did not flout her non-aggression pact with Poland, because the Polish Government was no longer in existence, he does so in

ignorance of the facts. The Polish Government *was* in being, and in control of a full third of the country. Its military and police powers were intact, communications had not been destroyed, and the fact that the whereabouts of the Government was often secret did not mean that it had no authority. In addition, its armies had just had their first successes of the war. The departure of the Government and the collapse of Polish resistance could not furnish an excuse for the Russian invasion; they were the *consequence* of that invasion. And when one notes, as, for example, Mr. G. D. H. Cole has done, that the Russo-German pact itself precipitated the war, the whole course of events looks like a premeditated partition of Poland. If, at the time, one failed to appreciate the cynicism of Soviet policy, the subsequent invasion of Finland was to remove many doubts.

On the afternoon of this tremendous day, I was driving down the main street of Cernăuți. Suddenly I saw Sir Howard Kennard's Rolls-Royce drawn up in front of the Consulate. I ran in. There were the Ambassador and 'the Nortons,' hungry, and rather bad-tempered. No rooms had been booked for the party, and they were also left without food or Roumanian money to buy it with. I fished out my own stock of Lei and went with Mrs. Norton to buy ham and rolls. While they sat around the empty office, I asked about the flight from Kut. The Ambassador's party had reached the long bridge, it seemed, by midday, and had found it filling with refugees. Some were long-distance travellers, in cars banked with luggage; but at this time the majority were poor local people. Churning slowly through, the diplomats' cars crossed over to the Roumanian side. There the frontier guard refused absolutely to admit them. This scene was described to me afterwards by American

journalists who witnessed it. Sir Howard sat like a monument in the Rolls-Royce, through the hot noon, while the refugees packed closer round him. Women and children fainted from hunger and heat and fatigue. The Ambassador sat on. The dispute with the frontier guard continued, and 'phone calls were put through to Bucharest. Rumour said that the Russians were coming swiftly down the frontier, and panic spread. Still Sir Howard sat immovable in the great car. Then suddenly they were through. Without a change of face, without a look behind, the Ambassador passed into Roumania.

Now it seemed clear that the Polish Government must itself leave shortly. So, after seeing the diplomats settled at the hotel, Greene and I left for the frontier, avoiding the Roumanian cordon by taking by-ways, sometimes bumping over cart-tracks and fields, hub-deep in fords, or loaded, car and all, on to a chain-pulled ferry. The border-village we found blocked for two miles. From wall to wall it was filled with buses, post-vans, lorries, motor-coaches, and a flood of private cars. I noticed a girl at the wheel of a mud-covered car, full of parents and children and suitcases, dented, and with the camouflaging branches only half torn away; she was chatting to a friend as she might outside a shop in Warsaw. A big bus announced its destination as Soznowiec, not far from Katowice; but it was full of wild-haired mothers and exhausted children, of bundles and blankets and remains of food. A trim green post-van was drawn up in front of us, with the red stripe and *Poczta Polska* along its side. I looked in. It was filled with postal officials, their blue uniforms and their eyes gaping, streaked with dirt, and huddled together like chickens.

We left our own car and walked on. Below the bridge-

head was a meadow, and there cars stood in irregular ranks and queues and rows. The light was reddening and failing; the cars looked intensely black, and the meadow intensely green. Beyond them, the bridge was black too, and the low ridge behind, on which Kutý stands, above the Dniester. I saw an airplane come up against the sky, then another, three, five, eight; like stones thrown against a lighted window. The air force was leaving Poland.

'Are you expecting many refugees?' I asked a Roumanian Captain of the Guard. He gestured to the bridge, across which a stream was moving. Then he pointed to the meadow.

'Many of those people have been waiting twelve hours,' he said.

I spoke to a middle-aged man in a car. 'Can you tell me if there are many more on the road behind you?' I asked.

'Many more. And many more who have not come. I have driven south-east from Lwów: the Germans were round us on three sides. The town is full of abandoned cars.'

'Why abandoned?'

'No petrol. I passed some acquaintances on the road who were using a mixture of whisky and petrol. Others I heard of who used petrol and paraffin. The rest left their cars.'

I wondered how so many had been able to retain their cars without getting them confiscated or requisitioned by the military.

After some argument, the Captain allowed us to pass, and we walked on to the bridge, the Dniester like a band of hammered metal under our feet. I wondered how disorganised we should find things on the Polish side; would there be any wild shooting? I wished Greene were not

quite so tall. As the groups of refugees came by, I noticed that they included Polish soldiers, in sixes and tens, not in formation, but walking with the blind look of men under orders. On the other side, I was to see why. Platoons were being marched up, halted and fallen out; then the men were sent over as 'refugees.' Once past the Roumanian guards, they had orders to wait for their officers, and were marched away. We talked to individual soldiers.

'What are you leaving Poland for?'

'I have no idea, Pani. We've not fought anyone yet. We are being sent out under orders. I think we're being made fools and cowards of.'

Then another:

'You must be glad to get away so easily,' suggested Greene.

'How should I be? My woman is back in our village with the children. It is near Bóbrka. I had no time to fetch them. What will they do?'

'Aren't you afraid of the Russians?' I put in.

'The Russians? They can't be worse than the Poles have been to us Ukrainians.'

A third confirmed their discontent at leaving.

'My officer says we must leave to fight for Poland. I see no sense in that. I want to stay in Poland. A lot of us feel like that, and we're going to get back somehow.'

By this time we were over. The Polish customs hut, where we had been entertained so courteously, was quite deserted now. A rifle lay in a corner. In the open space at the bridge-head, another group of postal officials sat, stood, wandered about aimlessly. The bridge road divided in two, one dropping away under a stone arch to the right, the other curving left round a grassy waste by the river. Most

of the cars seemed to come from the left, moving and stopping, summoned by a Polish officer. He was heavily cloaked, and possessed a great roaring voice, which bore traces of alcohol. Each side of the road, cars were halted on the grass, under the trees, whether abandoned or otherwise, I could not tell. Although I was to hear later of disorder and panic at Zaleszczyki and elsewhere along the frontier, here order was perfect. I thought how the habit of civilisation carries over when its sanctions are gone, even under the strain of fear and beggary; it was a compliment to the Poland which was now disappearing.

All of a sudden we saw the Consul from Katowice on the footboard of one of the approaching cars; he smiled and waved. Then, inside the car, I saw a military face I knew, and I understood what was happening. The Military Mission was still in Poland. By international law, they ought to be interned as combatants on entering Roumania. It was already known that the Germans were putting pressure on Roumania not to show hospitality to the Polish Government, if it should cross the frontier; the Nazis would be keener still to get an important group of British officers interned. So, when evacuation seemed inevitable, British passports were made up for musicians, accountants, writers, journalists, and other professions. On these Roumanian visas were to be obtained, and the party was to be passed through. The Roumanian Legation having already left, the passports were sent across for visa in Cernăuți. Then came a series of accidents. 'Someone' lost a number of the passports. On the 16th the Consul from Lwów went hurrying back from Cernăuți to the frontier with the rest, upon which visas had been secured. He was less fortunate at Sniatin than Greene and I had been

at Kutý; the frontier guard refused to let him through. Simultaneously, a messenger from the Mission was held up on the Polish side. At various times on the 17th I had heard of attempts to get the passports through; I deduced that the Katowice Consul had at last got them over, and was now conveying the officers across the frontier.

We returned to Roumania.

We found the Consul with our Roumanian Captain, standing with their noses a few inches apart, like two gaming cocks.

'These are important persons attached to the British Embassy,' said the Consul.

'There are no more important persons,' said the Roumanian with a fine gesture. 'Only human beings.'

'May I ask you to attend to these gentlemen?' The Captain's black eyes sparked with temper.

'Do you consider you've come here to give me orders?'

'Not at all. But as a matter of international courtesy ...'

H'm, I thought. Better withdraw. Half-an-hour later I heard the sequel. The Consul was speaking.

'I must really apologise for being a little hasty, just now. You've been most kind.' The Roumanian's moment had come.

'Monsieur,' he said, 'je regrette l'incident que vous avez voulu provoquer.'

It was on a lorry that we next saw the Consul, after dark had fallen and the rain had begun, tucked under a mackintosh with two obvious British tommies in plain clothes.

'This is the luggage of the British Embassy,' we heard him say to the Captain, who waved it by with a sweep of his electric torch.

Then came an interruption. The road was being cleared, cars turned away, or sent on from the bridge-head. Along the opposite bank, which had been dark until now, a chain of moving headlights showed.

'Who is it?' asked Greene.

'Marshal Smigly-Rydz, they say.'

'No, it's President Moszicki,' said an officer.

By now the cars had reached the far end of the bridge. An elegant young man came running over, and plunged into talk with the guard officers. He returned, and a car came. As its papers were being inspected, I saw automatic pistols handed over. Then a huge machine bumbled over: a Rolls or a Daimler, shining in the rain, two bare-headed young men in raincoats on the running-boards. It paused. The senior officer bent to the window, while the others saluted; the soldiers stared. I leaned forward, to see a dark figure and a blur of white hair. Then the car moved, and the second and last President of Pilsudski's Republic had left Poland.

It was 9.45 p.m. on September 17th. Colonel Beck was in the second car with his wife and step-daughter and Count Lubensky. The others, car after car, and then lorries full of baggage, bounced over the bridge and slipped away down the hill after him.

During the next four hours we saw the Consul at intervals. Time after time he plodded back over the dark and slippery planking. Once he appeared with a ripped trouser-leg, having gone through one of the holes in the wood. But he always came with another car-load of 'musicians,' 'journalists' or 'business-men,' whose collective function he announced as 'attached to the British Embassy.' A 'musician' in red tabs would hardly do, and majors,

colonels and even the General himself had been bundled into civilian clothes or covered with raincoats. One bright pair of officers had even carried tent-poles, which had had to be removed from their car.

After a few uncomfortable hours of sleep in the car, we prepared for a last visit to Poland. For some hours we could not induce the Roumanians to let us out at all; but we crossed before midday. The bridge was deserted. On the grass area beyond, an anti-aircraft gun stood abandoned. We walked up the hill, through the suburbs; the villagers were going in and out of their houses, but always with a glance up the road. I wondered which of them would be called on for the village soviet. The removal of the diplomatic cars made a difference to the look of the village. There were far fewer people on the pavements, too. Still, the place was normal enough, except that everyone had one eye up the road. We walked along some way, until we reached the cross-roads on the further side. There a lorry was drawn up, with two machine-guns mounted on it to cover the two inland roads. The ammunition-belts were ready fed into their breeches, and Polish soldiers squatted by, while others kept watch through binoculars. There were not more than eight or ten men in all.

By the roadside, a group of villagers stood, some with the air-raid wardens' arm-bands. One of these we tackled.

'Are you expecting the Russians here?'

'Yes, we were told that they would be here at noon.'

'Are you preparing against them, then?' Greene gestured to the machine-guns. The warden looked astounded.

'Against the Russians? Why? No, no! We are afraid the Ukrainians will break in and kill us all before the Russians can get here.'

Just then a crackle of shooting broke out on the far side of the ridge.

'Would you prefer the Russians or the Germans to come?'

Again the villager looked astounded.

'Of course we prefer the Russians,' he said. 'We don't want the Germans, my word.'

Shooting increased in frequency. The soldiers trained their guns on the approaches. My villager asked the time.

'The Russians should have been here half-an-hour ago,' he said anxiously.

Presently, as we watched, a grey mass bulged into sight at the top of the ridge opposite.

'The tanks! The Russian tanks!' said everyone in the little group. It seemed time to be going.

'Good luck,' we said and shook hands.

On the drive back to Cernăuți, we took still another road, and came up with the military refugees. They were in lorries now, with coaches full of women and children, whom I supposed to be officers' families. There was a high proportion of aircraft men among the troops—ground-crews by their look—whose presence was accounted for by the Polish planes flying by. The High Command had obviously strained every sinew to get the remnants of its air force away. I counted seventy-four machines, and then gave up. Some had run out of petrol and made forced landings; we passed the wreckage of one on the top of a small hill. In the great procession there was a smell of dust and petrol and perspiration. The women and girls were eating their lunch in the coaches, or visiting back and forth. I have seen something of refugees, but never such a comfortable and largely cheerful crowd as these. All the same, we did not

want to spend days in their company, and to pass or return were impossible, so we ran off our road and swung over the stubble, leaving the column of vehicles winding through the little hills. We went cross-country for miles. Once we crossed a ditch on a barn-door borrowed from a farm. Again, with a peasant as guide, we drove up the side of a hill, across a field ready for ploughing. At last we struck our road. Almost at once a military post stopped us.

‘You cannot use this road.’

‘But the other is blocked with refugees. We must get to Cernăuți.’

‘You cannot use this road. Draw up behind the car here.’

To go back to the frontier or to rejoin the caravan was unbearable. I swerved as though to draw in; then, seeing the road clear, jumped the car away. We expected a rifle to bang, but nothing happened. The Roumanians are a mild people.

That evening we reached Cernăuți, where we found the Ambassador ready to leave. Sir Howard had insisted on waiting to see Colonel Beck. He had told him that, since the Polish Government had now left its country, to which he, Sir Howard, was accredited, he considered his mission at an end. He then left for Bucharest. We were to see him there at the Legation, in a bear-garden of British refugees, mission officers, his own staff and that of the Minister, as well as a crowd of Poles, who, until a week or two before, had been important. Bucharest rumour said that the Minister, Sir Reginald Hoare, was indifferently pleased with such a distinguished guest on his hands. It was also reported that the two eminent diplomats had disagreed as to which of them should make the official report on the war in Poland.

However that may be, I never knew Sir Howard as sociable as at that time. In early October he left in Lord Forbes' private plane for Paris, and in time was reappointed as Ambassador to the Polish Government-in-exile, at Angers.

Meantime, at Cernăuți, the job of reporting the Polish war had come to an end for Greene and me; though later on I was to see plenty of the Poles outside Poland. We started our two days' drive over the Carpathians to Bucharest. Bad roads forced me to concentrate on driving. The mountain meadows seemed a wash of sienna, an expanse of pale colour, with the beech woods blotting it, showing whitish on the outcroppings of rock. There was the same grey-white in the high points of the mountains. I looked up at them and thought of Van Gogh: 'notes on the blue, my dear Theo, or in the blue, I should say.'

In this bareness, the villages were an exotic element. Blocky white houses, with roofs of brown, were piled up to Byzantine churches, their towers visible for fifty miles. The dusty road, marked 'under construction' by Roumanian map-makers, was blocked every few miles, though I could see no road-building going on. There was just a sign: 'détour.' These by-passes were often not roads at all, and they took us into upland villages, where the people stared, seeming never to have seen a car before. As it darkened, we came to such a détour, leading, it seemed, into the open fields. Searching the ground with torches for wheel-marks, we found none. Then a local car came by, and we followed, keeping the tail-light in view over rough, invisible ground, a full thirty kilometres.

'Is it going back to the road, or to a village?' said Greene.

'Heaven knows. Our only chance is to keep it in view.'

Presently we were on the road again.

After a night at Român, we were beyond the hills. Here also there were détours for the newly-repaired stretches, still roped-off, so that traffic might not spoil them. There were military posts—'controls'—at each village, and sometimes where there was no village at all. We began to pass cars again, muddy, camouflaged, some bullet-marked and held together with string; one containing soldiers with bayonets fixed, though I have no idea how it could have got through. Some diplomats were taken out of their cars and walked to the police station for inspection, but we were undisturbed. Only, when we stopped for food or petrol, one question was invariable: 'Have you Roumanian money? We don't take Polish money.'

Presently, in the course of a détour, the car stopped in a village. Nothing would move her. I tried to find out what was wrong, while Greene made suggestions, helpful and unhelpful. Then a tyre slowly whistled out its air with a puncture. We had stopped outside the village school; soon the schoolmistress and all her pupils came to see. The mistress sent several away to find a mechanic. Others went for the doctor, who possessed a chauffeur (in the end to be my saviour). I looked up, to see a large car, with uniformed chauffeur and two clerics sitting behind.

'Which is the way to Bucharest?' asked the driver. I told him.

'I am in difficulties with my car,' said I. 'Could you spare a moment to help me?'

The chauffeur stiffened.

'Corps Diplomatique,' he said woodenly.

'But I really do not know where I can get help here,' I pleaded.

'I am afraid we are in a hurry,' put in one of the priests.
I learned later that he was the Papal Nuncio to Warsaw.
And they passed by on the other side.

XI

WAR AND DEFEAT

1. *The course of the war*

ALL the time I had been in Poland, neither I nor anyone else had known much of the course of the war. With the lack of telegraphic, telephonic, or postal communication (except for Government business), the absence of a national nerve-centre after the evacuation of Warsaw, and the cutting of the Polish army into three, ignorance was inevitable. The newspaper correspondents, save myself, were outside Poland after the sixth or seventh day, and such despatches as they could send were so delayed that often they arrived too late to be worth printing. Poles who fought in different sectors knew only the sand-dunes or the pine-woods through which they themselves had sniped and scrambled. So far as the details of the campaign are known at all, they have been collected from the reports of the various commanders by the exiled Polish Government at Angers.

A characteristic of the invasion was that towns were unimportant. In trying to trace its progress, place-names must be used; but they represent nothing but geographical points, spots on the map, by which to measure the rate of the advance. The Germans based their attack upon the use of motorised columns, piercing the Polish lines, and leaving behind not only the towns but also masses of Polish troops. (The same tactic, of occupying the countryside around a town, and leaving the town until it became untenable, had been tried out by the Fascists in Spain). The essence of German strategy was to develop a series of 'pincer' move-

ments, isolating whole Polish armies, or forcing them to retreat headlong, to preserve their communications.

From Pomerania on the west and East Prussia on the east, these pincers closed on the base of the Corridor. A part of the Pomorze army escaped in the first days of the war; it fought a rearguard action along the Vistula, then assaulted the Germans surrounding Warsaw, and thus cut its way through to join the Warsaw Command. It lost only two thousand men on the way. Behind it, the German armies converged at Bydgoszcz (Bromberg), which they entered on September 5th. The remainder of the Corridor army was isolated in Gdynia, where it held out until the 14th.

Meanwhile, another German column had broken through from East Prussia, advancing due south. By the sixth or seventh, according to the German High Command, it was within thirty miles of the capital. Again dividing, in the amoeba-like manner of the German columns, it left one part of itself to face Warsaw from the north, while the other pressed on eastward, then southward, to operate to the east of Warsaw.

The toughest nut on the frontier was really Katowice, with its batteries, tank-traps, and three concentric lines of earth-works and underground fortifications; but it never had to be assaulted. The Germans were able to attack from the south-west, through the Moravian Gate, which the Poles had not fortified because until recently their neighbour on this side had been Czechoslovakia.

Some fifty miles further north, another German thrust took Czestochowa on the 4th, and the Army of Silesia saw itself threatened with isolation as the pincers closed. It hastily retreated, abandoning Katowice, one part marching north-eastward to join the Warsaw Command, the other

moving eastward, via Cracow and Tarvow, to Lwów. The German advance from Czeszochowa now divided, in its turn. One force turned northward, towards Lodz, to take part in the enveloping of the Polish Army of Poznan. The other followed the Polish Army of Silesia, took Kielce on the 6th and Radom (in the central Polish industrial area) on the 8th. Fighting continued in this district until the 11th, when the Germans forced the middle Vistula with tanks.

Meanwhile, the province of Poznan, forming the most westerly bulge of Poland, was invaded from the north-west, and the Germans forced the passage of the River Warta at Sieradz on the 5th. They moved round to the north-east of the town of Poznan, making for Lodz. Meanwhile, the force from Czeszochowa was also approaching Lodz from the south. Lodz fell on the 9th; the two forces met, and the army of Poznan was in a bag. It never got out. Subsequently, it endeavoured to cut its way through the surrounding Germans at Kutno, where the Germans fought practically back-to-back—some units resisting the eastward drive of the Army of Poznan, the others facing eastward against the Warsaw Command. In this battle, the Polish cavalry showed sublime but unavailing bravery in repeated charges against the German tanks. It seems amazing that the Germans should have succeeded in working upon the Poles a repetition of Napoleon's Ulm campaign, a hundred and thirty-four years after the defeat of the incompetent General Mack. It is just possible, however, that the Army of Poznan was deliberately sacrificed to cover the retreat of the Pomorze forces and the Army of Silesia, and to give time for the formation of new lines along the middle Vistula.

Most surprising of all was the German thrust upon Poland's southern frontier. The western end of the Carpathians, the

High Tatras, forms one of the most formidable mountain barriers in Europe. Moreover, the state upon the other side, Slovakia, was supposedly neutral. I had observed, however, on a visit to Slovakia in July, that the Germans were militarising this 'neutral' country. Military roads, a hundred miles of new railway track, conduits bridges—these enabled them to make their secret concentrations. Now, upon the outbreak of war, they threw their mountain divisions over the passes of the Tatras—not yet, for several weeks to come, to be blocked by the first falls of snow—and poured them down upon the railway junction of Nowy Targ. A tiny force with machine-guns could have held up this advance, but even this the Poles, with fantastic improvidence, had neglected to send. Meeting with no opposition, the Germans crossed the range. On the very first day of the war, they descended upon the railway-line which winds its way up from the plain of southern Poland to the Carpathian ski-ing resort of Zakopane. From here the Carpathian Army marched northward, and then divided. A detachment turned towards Cracow, which they entered from the east side on the 6th, effecting a junction with the Army of the Moravian Gate; the main force moved eastward, towards Przemyśl. By the 11th, according to the German High Command, it had driven the Poles back behind the River San. On the 15th, it occupied Przemyśl. Between the Carpathian Army operating upon the San and the Czesłochowa-Kielce-Radom force fighting upon the middle Vistula the army which had passed through the Moravian Gate and Silesia pushed on from Cracow, moved north-eastward down the upper course of the Vistula, and reached Sandomierz, at the confluence of the Vistula and the San, on the 9th.

The German advance from the San was slower than

elsewhere, and later even sustained reverses. This was due in part to the fact that the Carpathian Army consisted of lightly-armed mountain troops; but even more to the prowess of the Polish Army of the south-east, under General Soznkowski, who, alone among the Polish commanders, fought with real distinction. Indeed, in the last days of fighting he was beginning to retrieve the dismal fortunes of the campaign; but his incipient successes were nipped in the bud by the arrival of the Russians.

Thus, so far as our present knowledge goes, the Germans had, by the end of the first ten days, nipped off with their pincers movements the Corridor in the north and Poznan in the west; they had surrounded the district of Warsaw; and the Polish Army of the south-east was left to fight a lone battle, with the High Command and the Government in its shelter. The South-Eastern Army, the Warsaw Command (reinforced by the troops which cut their way through from Pomorze, and by the Army of Silesia) and the encircled Army of Poznan, vainly attempting to cut its way out at Kutno, were the three main divisions into which the Polish army had become separated. In the Corridor, Gdynia held out until the 14th, and the suburb of Oksyvia until the 19th. There was also fighting north-east of Warsaw, on the River Narew, and around Bialystok, Brest-Litovsk (east of Warsaw) about the 15th.

On September 12th the German High Command announced that fighting west of the Vistula was coming to an end. The Army of Poznan had definitely failed in its attempt to break out, and from this time onward surrenders began. In view of the German success in preventing the powerful Army of Poznan from re-establishing contact with the Warsaw Command, it is all the more remarkable

that the small Army of Pomorze should have succeeded where that of Poznań failed. About September 15th, according to Polish information, it rejoined the army around Warsaw. If the south-east produced the best campaigning, around Lwów and Lublin, and if Warsaw and Modlin put up the longest resistance, the Army of Pomorze, with its 'Long March' and its desperate hacking of a path, gave the finest example of heroic accomplishment.

By September 16th the Germans in the south and south-east had crossed not only the middle Vistula but the upper reaches of the Dniester, and had surrounded Lublin on three sides. Soznkowski, however, was still fighting back, and his army was by no means a defeated force. According to the German High Command, the Germans now held a line stretching from Białystok in the north, via that old fortress of the last war, Brest-Litowsk, by Włodzimierz to Lwów and Przemyśl. (Lwów, under its German name of Lemberg, and Przemyśl, which the late Sir Henry Wilson used to insist was pronounced Chemise, will be remembered as the strong places so frequently taken and re-taken by Russians and Austrians in the Galician campaigns from 1914 until the Russian Revolution.)

Such was the position when the Russian troops moved into Poland, in the early morning of September 18th. The new invaders, according to their own General Staff, crossed the frontier along its whole length from the Russo-Latvian border to the Dniester. On the next day the Russian and German detachments made contact at—of all places—Brest-Litowsk, where the Russians had signed an humiliating peace treaty with the Germans in 1917. From here the Russians flooded slowly over Eastern Poland, and down to the pocket south-west of the Dniester, up to the Roumanian and Hungarian

frontiers. There was no military resistance. The south-eastern Army collapsed at once, and there followed the distressing scenes of hopeless exodus which I have already described.

Polish resistance continued in Warsaw and its neighbourhood. The Germans summoned the city to surrender on the 16th, but the Poles did not reply. Isolated in a sea of invaders, they stood out against terrific bombardment and bombing, fighting their battle of the standard. Not until the 27th did Warsaw surrender, and Modlin fell on the 28th. The Germans entered the capital. Poland's resistance was over.

2. Why Poland collapsed

The strongest second-class power on the Continent had collapsed, in only three weeks of war. How was it possible? The Poles themselves have two excuses: their inferiority in aircraft; and lack of support, both before and during the war, by the Allies.

It is constantly said, and in responsible quarters, that the German air force disabled all Polish aerodromes in the first days of the war. That is not true. I myself saw the Cracow and Katowice airports in use, after bombardment, for the first three days of the war; I saw that of Lublin after almost a week, and that of Łuck after ten days. It is true that the Łuck ground was not being made use of; but in those latter days I often observed military 'planes camouflaged on temporary airfields, with no loss to their efficiency. Again, a distinguished Polish officer now in England assured me, not knowing that I had been present, that hundreds of German 'planes went over Katowice on the first day of the war. Raiding, he said, went on with the same overwhelming superiority. This is, of course, also untrue. I never again

saw so many bombers together as over Katowice—but there were at most forty in all. During the rest of the war, there were frequently 'planes overhead, very low; but they hunted mostly in threes. Sometimes one noticed a formation of nine; but on the other hand, I saw single raiders over Wolhynia and the Ukraine, perhaps a hundred miles from their base.

It is much truer to say that lack of fuel kept the Polish flyers grounded. Whose fault was that? In the first place, the Poles had neglected to establish fuel-dumps in different parts of the country, from which distribution could take place. Secondly, for reasons which will appear later, they had failed to import adequate reserves. Thirdly, the German air force was able to bomb the roads and railway from the Polish oil-fields so effectively that supplies could not come through. But German air superiority seems to have been established in the first days of the war, before the petrol shortage can have had much effect.

Next, as to the complaints against the Allies. The first is lack of diplomatic support before war began. To fit our conciliatory foreign policy, say the Poles, their mobilisation was not made general until too late, and a part of their military strength was missing. It is true that general mobilisation papers were posted by August 28th, for I saw them in Katowice; and on my journey to Warsaw next day I noticed the side of the railway line black with men, hurrying to reach their enlistment depots (usually near stations) before midnight. But Polish apologists reply that three weeks are required for a general mobilisation.

Even when time was available, the Poles did not always make proper use of it. A Czech Legion was formed during the summer, from Czech military refugees; it was to serve

with the Polish Army, under a famous Czech General. The Legion was in existence for several months before the war, yet it never received a gun or a uniform from the Polish authorities, and it was given no place in the allegedly 'insufficient' Polish forces. The Czech General remarked, in Cernaui afterwards, that his dearest wish was to give Marshal Smigly-Rydz a horse-whipping. No, the Poles did not need three weeks to prepare; twenty years had not been enough.

Yet, in another way, Britain was even more to blame. Our change of policy was too slow. After the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Nevile Henderson viewed the Germans more realistically; they therefore concluded the Anglo-Polish Pact. This was, however, a bluff, with no hand to support it. The policy of alliance with Poland made the material defence of that country a vital interest of Great Britain; yet the British Government seems to have exhibited a criminal irresponsibility in its neglect to afford material support. Although it was hardly possible to send a British army to Poland, inestimable service could have been rendered in the supply of equipment, in kind and in cash. As to the latter, four or five months were to elapse between the guarantee to Poland and the granting of a loan. For the former, I have good grounds for saying that a confidential list was received from the Poles, enumerating the technical equipment, ordnance, and military machines that they required. Yet, up to June 1939, the British Government was actually buying anti-aircraft guns, which Poland's need of foreign exchange forced her to sell; thus, so far from supplying Poland's needs, we were actually stripping her of defensive weapons which she urgently required.

Not only was the Pact an unsupported bluff: the calculations of the British military experts were unsound, into the

bargain. On my visit to Warsaw, before the outbreak of war, I found them optimistic. A senior officer shook his head over the motorised divisions of the German army.

'Remember that tanks cannot go where four wheels can't follow,' he said. 'They must have food and fuel supplies, otherwise they are immobilised.'

'But this country is neither mountain nor marsh, Colonel,' I said. 'Why shouldn't the supply column follow?'

'You know that, outside Silesia, the roads are vile. As they retreat, the Poles will make them impassable. Pretty soon the mechanised divisions will be holding up the advance, not aiding it.'

'How on earth will the Poles keep the Nazis back, so as to bring off a strategic retreat of that kind? Their own motor units are not impressive. You can't throw cavalry against tanks and armoured cars.'

'Cavalry like the Poles' is more effective than you think. Motor columns must stop at night; then they are more vulnerable than ordinary troops. The cavalry will raid them, surprise them. They will destroy some, and break the morale of the rest.'

'Even if the retreat succeeds, surely Silesian industry will be lost pretty soon?'

'Certainly,' said the Colonel.

'Then how can the Poles go on getting industrial supplies? I heard in London that they had even asked us for a list of articles which would take two years to supply.'

'You forget the New Industrial Zone in central Poland. It is already able to turn out a full production quota. General Ironside was impressed with it. And, as you know, they've made all preparations to evacuate the Silesian factories to that region.'

'Only—Radom and Sandomierz are not so far from the frontier themselves. How long can the Poles hold the Germans back?'

'Oh, some months, we expect. Until our pressure in the West becomes effective. The Polish plans are most realistic. We are well satisfied with them.'

Such were British expectations of the course of the war. But the German General Staff schemed more brilliantly, and the Polish plans did not turn out so well, after all. As I have said before, the Polish attempt to hold a long and untenable frontier resulted in their armies being either cut off or forced into headlong retreat, when the extended line was pierced. The German General Staff had chosen the season perfectly; though Sir Nevile Henderson may be right in thinking that they were nervous of delay, and would willingly have struck a few weeks earlier. For political reasons, Herr Hitler cut it fine; but fortune favoured him, and the weather held. Poland's fields were baked hard, her riverbeds and water-courses dry; the motorised columns could have done without the roads, even had the Poles destroyed them; tanks and cars and lorries could cross open country. In perfect flying weather, and in the absence of Polish fighters, the German air force was able to blast a path for the German army. It was a model of a mobile campaign. The tragedy was the Poles' traditional reliance on cavalry; and their British advisers bear a grave responsibility if they encouraged them in this fantasy. Again and again throughout the war, detachments of cavalry seem to have been flung against motorised units: tanks, armoured cars and machine-guns. In these obscure, lost Charges of the Light Brigade, the flower of the heroic cavalry was butchered. By reason of the ineffectiveness of their heavy industry, the Poles had a

nineteenth-century army to oppose to the German war-machine.

Why could not Polish heavy industry equip the army? Poland inherited one industrial region from Germany, Upper Silesia; one from Austria, the Dobrowa; she annexed one from the Czechs, Teschen; and she was building up a new one for herself, the 'Z.O.P.', or Central Industrial Zone. Then what was wrong? The answer goes back into the economic history of Poland since the last war. After the foundation of the Republic, there was little economic change. Industrialists, and especially mine-owners, made big profits in 1926 and after, but the 'thirties swallowed them up.

'Why didn't you use your profits to modernise your plant?' I asked a Silesian industrialist.

'My dear young lady, we are realists. We couldn't suppose that Germany would be reconciled to the loss of that part of her industry, and with the rise of Hitler we saw that we were right.'

'You mean that Germany will recapture the industrial region, one of these days?'

'We don't say so publicly, and you mustn't quote me. But if such a thing should happen, it would be a pity to make Germany a present of the capital we should have sunk in modernisation. Don't you agree?'

'Perhaps. But isn't the effect to raise prices, and consequently to restrict consumption? Isn't Polish industry too big for its internal market?'

'That is quite true. Between ourselves, do not invest in Polish industry. It is a giant standing on match-sticks.'

As my friend admitted, the consequence of his colleagues' 'realism' was that Polish industry entered the shrinking world market of the 'thirties in a poor competitive position.

Its profits seemed likely to disappear altogether. Only one course remained: high tariffs to segregate the internal market, and the restriction of production to raise prices. Poland, with its eighty-five per cent. of peasants, was never a big market; with rising prices and falling employment, it became smaller still. Instead of an expanding economy, the Poles were launched on a contracting one; they decreased the very industrial facilities they needed; they decreased their national income; and the unmechanised state of the Polish army was one of the consequences.

Nor did the acquisition of the Trzyniec steelworks from Czechoslovakia, and the development of the Z.O.P., improve the situation. To fit this new production into Poland's cramped economy without depressing industrial prices, existing industries had still further to restrict their production. In the development of Polish industry, the pursuit of profit by the owners was allowed to prevail over the military requirements of the country; it also operated to damage the economic welfare of the people.

The deliberate raising of the industrial price-level increased the gap between industrial and agricultural prices, and struck directly at the peasants. The only agrarian policy of the Polish Government was to break up the big estates—particularly those in German ownership; but the Polish peasant was merely turned from a labourer or a tenant into a subsistence farmer, and was still not assured of more than a bare existence. This impoverishment of the peasantry, caused by the industrialists' efforts to save their profits, produced serious political consequences, for the peasantry, having almost nothing to lose, remained apathetic. When I criticised the dictatorship, my Polish friends would answer:

'Ah, but remember that eighty-five per cent. of our people are peasants. Up on the Russian frontier, they are moujiks still. When *they* become politically articulate, we can have a democracy.'

'How will they be made articulate?'

'Well, by education; by a rising standard of living. Look what a potential market the peasants are! We shall rise to prosperity and democracy on their shoulders.'

This proposal contained its own answer. The peasants could never be made articulate, because they lacked the means to raise themselves. Their standard of living was *not* rising, and they were *not* being made ready for democracy.

The position of the Ukrainian or White Russian peasants was even worse, for they were losing what they had once enjoyed. The Polish Republic deliberately planted Polish peasants as colonists among the minorities. One can thus understand the unwillingness of these minorities to fight, their readiness to be used as spies against their masters, and the rejoicing in their villages over the arrival of the Russians.

Nor were the effects much different in the industrial population, which had been the backbone of Poland. The Republic was the work of Pilsudski and his 'professional' patriots, and of the industrial working class; the peasants and the bourgeoisie took little part. When the Trade Unions repudiated Pilsudski, in the late 'twenties, the Republic lost what popular support it had. When the period of contraction set in, a large part of the industrial workers became permanently unemployed. As with the peasants, economic misfortune bore with special harshness upon the minorities, above all upon the Silesian 'Germans.' The consequences, in espionage, sabotage and treason, I met at the beginning of my own journey.

XII

INSIDE POLAND

WITH its reinforcements bombed to pieces, its communications threatened, and its ammunition giving out, the army of Silesia began its retreat on the third day of the war. My old friend, Colonel Żoltaszek, was in Katowice, but he did not accompany them. Leading six thousand of his police, he marched eastward. It was already thought that south-eastern Poland would be the last great stronghold of the Republic, and the Government wanted their crack police force there to keep order.

During the first ten days of the war, the Colonel and his men were marching eastward, bombed constantly, machine-gunned from the air, losing men every day. They lacked food, rest, sleep; but they conserved their ammunition. It must have been shortly before the thirteenth that they reached Tarnopol, for on that day I saw Colonel Żoltaszek there; he was then in command of the district. I have already told how he received the news of Russia's invasion, five days afterwards.

'When I saw it was no use,' he told me the story afterwards, 'I thought of retreat. I did not know that the Roumanians would open their frontier, so I thought that the best crossing would be through the Carpathian passes into Ruthenia.'

With those of his police who were still fit for service, he marched south-westward again.

Somewhere north of Zlotnicki, he had a serious check. The Poles had built enormous tank-traps there, to hold up the Germans on their expected advance into Eastern Poland; trying to cross these obstacles, the Colonel lost a number of men. In spite of the need for hurry, he was forced back almost to Tarnopol, straight towards the Russian advance. Then, turning west, and south beyond Brzczany, he and his men drove down again in the direction of the Hungarian frontier. The region was full of advance-parties of Russian troops, and they zig-zagged to avoid them.

But the Russians were not the only danger. The country was under no rule at all; the woods were full of Poles gone bandit, Poles escaping, Ukrainian bands, broken parties of soldiers fighting their way to the frontier.

The police skirmished forward, zig-zagging south. They fought anyone who got in their way—often without knowing who they were. Everything was confused.

‘We did not know where we were,’ said the Colonel. ‘We did not know whether the region was already occupied. Will you believe it, we did not know even when we crossed the frontier!’

Long after this fighting had ended in the south-east, and only bands of disorganised soldiers were left, organised resistance was still effective round Warsaw. The capital was a Polish island now, the last of the Republic.

Over the city the air raids continued unceasingly, night and day. Whole streets were annihilated by bombs. At intervals the suburbs were shelled by the German field artillery. There was little food, the water became tainted, and there was no light at all. After some time a part of the sewage system ceased to function, and the low level of the Vistula added to the stench produced. In the ruined houses

bodies began to decompose. After the city had fallen, the Germans were forced to blow up many of these ruins to avoid the spread of disease.

The civilian defence corps worked continuously to dig out and bury the dead; but they could not keep up with the faster work of the bombers. These civilian defenders organised the distribution of food and medical supplies, water-disinfection, trench-digging, and the construction of air-raid shelters. They took over the maintenance of order, for many of the Warsaw police had fled. Besides their services to the population, they also worked with the troops, carrying on the transport of their munitions and supplies, and even blowing up roads to hinder the enemy's advance. Apart from these civilian heroes, the people as a whole huddled in their houses or in trenches or shelters, waiting for death.

'It was like being in a steel drum,' said a neutral, who escaped. 'The heavy artillery went on all the time. It shook one to the heart. Then that sound of machine-guns! It isn't like anything else, that murderous sound. The bombers stooped over the town and rained their bombs. House after house flashed, was disembowelled, and crumbled in on itself. The people screamed. Passers-by threw themselves down like beasts; flung themselves into the trenches, under porches, stumbling and falling. Then the road of the motors was over. For a moment a great calm spread. In the street, the bodies lay quietly.'

'How did the people behave? Wasn't there horrible panic?' I asked him.

'No. They behaved with a courage you could almost call piety. Like people condemned to death, whose determination carries them on. They dug away at shelter trenches in

the roads and squares; literally, they were digging their own graves. I can see now what I saw one morning, on the Place Napoléon, crossing it just after an air raid. A whole crowd were on their knees, praying, in front of an unfinished trench. The raiders had caught them there, with their machine-guns. Those who lived, prayed on.'

'But didn't you get overwhelmed by it all? How could one go on?'

'I don't know. I don't know how I'm here, and still less how I'm sane. We felt terrible pity. But we were really stunned, I suppose. One hardly seemed conscious at all sometimes. It was strange to touch one's own skin.'

'Weren't you absolutely terrified?'

'We just sat behind shattered windows, and waited for our turn. I remember that when we looked at one another, all our faces seemed the same. We had lost the characteristics which distinguish one. I was there ten nights and days.'

'You were able to get food, then?'

'We took it in turns to queue up. You had to stand in the road from five or six in the morning until ten or twelve. Four times the raiders machine-gunned us while we were waiting. We buried the dead there. Then we waited again. We gave a lot of lives for that food.'

'How did you get away in the end?'

'The first time we tried to take refuge in the country, at Thouch. We arrived at dusk. The village was in flames. There was nothing to be done but return to Warsaw. Our journey back was horrible. Along the road there was nothing but dead horses, dead women and children, dead soldiers. And the wounded! They lay at the roadside without help. They had no hope from us, but just watched us pass. Their eyes seemed enormous, shining. I don't think I could have

gone on, but the raiders came back shooting at us, hunting us again.'

'But the second time you were luckier?'

'Yes. I was brought out by the efforts of the Swiss Consul. The Polish family I lived with begged me to stay. We cried. I said stupid words of hope and affection. They looked at me as though I were the symbol of living. I was the one who had permission to live, you understand? I was "saved". For them, life was ending.'

'How did you get out of the city? There was a truce negotiated by the neutrals, I know. The train left then, with the rest of them?'

'Yes. We left also, a hundred and twenty Swiss, in five motor-coaches. About six in the evening. But we were delayed until the truce was over. The bombardment began again as we left. Would they blow up the bridge before we crossed? We crossed. As we passed the Polish lines, I felt bitterly ashamed before these men. But they didn't look reproachful; there was a kind of affectionate light in their eyes, a joy at seeing us going towards life.'

'You got safely across the battlefield, then?'

'It was little thanks to the Germans. They gave us ten minutes at a point they designated. To the left and right, firing went on. Among us were old and infirm people, children, too terrified to walk. "Let me go back and help them," I said to a senior German officer. "At your own risk," he replied coldly.'

The four-hours' truce took place on September 21st. It had been arranged by the neutral governments so that 'foreigners' might leave the capital. A special train was to carry them through the German lines. The inadequacy of British evacuation, on the outbreak of war, had left a number

of British subjects in Warsaw, in addition to 'British protected persons.' Could any of these leave on the train? Eight Englishmen and thirty-one Palestinian Jews did so in the end, joining the twelve hundred neutrals for whom the transport was arranged. Military lorries collected the people from where they were staying, and took them to a station outside the city.

Firing had died away. The train drew past the Polish outposts, and approached the hummocks and ridges and earth-splodges which marked the German front line. Grey soldiers rose and boarded the coaches. Then it moved again, into occupied territory, and a rigorous examination of the passengers began. All their passports were taken, to be returned only in Berlin. Then the train went on, by an indirect route to Königsberg.

The Nazis did not lose the chance of impressing neutrals; every station was heaped with food; but on the restaurants were notices warning Jews away.

In Königsberg the passengers waited for a ship three days, then went on by slow stages to Berlin. The journey took nine days in all. The American Consul-General in Berlin has shown great kindness to Britons since the war began; he took up the cases of the Englishmen and Palestinians, but, in spite of all he could do, they were interned. The other foreigners were held up for a few days and then their passports were returned to them. They were free to leave.

The most remarkable story of the Warsaw train was that of two Czech refugees, Jewish socialists, whom I had known in Silesia. They had escaped from Prague after the German occupation. Unable to obtain a British visa in Poland, they had left Katowice for Warsaw a few days before the outbreak

of war. They remained in the capital until, somehow, they managed to leave on the train with the neutrals. In Berlin, the headquarters of the 'menace' from which they had fled to Poland, they stayed at one of the best hotels. After ten days they got visas for Hungary, and a Gestapo permit to leave. To-day they are living comfortably in Jugoslavia.

On September 27th the German troops entered Warsaw. What was the city like then?

A great part of it, certainly, was in ruins. Estimates of the dead vary, up to as much as two-thirds of the population. One would have thought that the conquering army might have shown some kindness to people so brave and so broken; there is no evidence that they did so.

'I was walking across the Pilsudskiego,' said a young medical student (whom I met in a Hungarian refugee camp). 'I was in my soldier's uniform, because I had nothing else to wear. A German soldier came across and ordered me to go away. Troops were coming through the square, he said. Perhaps I did not move quickly, or not humbly. He picked up the butt of his rifle and struck me on the arm; the pain told me that it was broken. It seemed to me time to leave Warsaw.'

The Nazis impressed all the able-bodied men to clear the city. Women, and even children, were forced to work for the conquerors. None were paid. No heed was given to their own necessities.

'I remained in Warsaw twenty days,' a responsible Pole told me, a man who had been the honorary consul of a foreign power. 'Then I saw that the population was being enslaved. I decided it was time to escape, somehow or other.'

At least the Germans are good organisers, however in-

humane they may be. The ruined capital would surely be well-run, the ruined economy repaired and normal life resumed. So one would think—but this has not been the case.

Monsieur Josef Marcus, former Estonian minister, revisited the city about Christmas. He came back very unhappy after what he had seen. Many of the beautiful buildings were destroyed, he said. Windows were still broken, three months after the siege. The inhabitants were cold and frightened, and food prices had risen to ten times what they were before the war. The shops were crowded, everyone investing their last money in food; for the German officials told them that when supplies were exhausted no more might be forthcoming. The streets were full of beggars, not members of the submerged class, but everyone who had spent their last money, and eaten their last food, particularly if their houses had also been destroyed. The number of child-deaths, from shock and exposure and malnutrition, had been very high. Later reports, towards spring, have reflected the work done by American relief. The Americans have not only opened soup-kitchens, but made family allowances of food as well. Such business as exists is entirely German, and a report described 'virtually the whole population of Warsaw' as 'unemployed and on relief.'

In spite of all city-clearing, Monsieur Marcus said the stench from the corpse-filled ruins and broken sewers was such that he was forced to live on his train.

There has been the natural reaction from desperation, in Warsaw, to a hectic, impossible gaiety. The London press has carried reports of the 'night clubs' which exist all over the city, and which open in early afternoon, since the German curfew compels them to close at eight. It is a distorted

reflection of the old life of the Europejski and the Bristol Bar thrown on to a screen of ruins.

Meanwhile—long before Warsaw had fallen—the Germans occupied the Upper Silesian industrial zone. They announced that they had evidence of a massacre of the German minority by the Poles. A suspiciously long time afterwards, in February 1940, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published the details. Fifty-three thousand Germans, the majority of them in Silesia, were killed just before and just after the declaration of war, said the *Beobachter*. Such a thing could have happened in only two ways: by mass military executions, or during a Saint Bartholomew's Eve. Neither could have taken place secretly. I was myself in the German minority districts until the third day of the war; I saw and heard nothing, other than the execution of rebels, spies and saboteurs, the right of every state in wartime. The truth seems to be that this is the psychological strategy which Hitler has made familiar. Accused of crimes, he neither admits nor denies them, but accuses his opponents of the same crimes, and tries to shout them down.

The last Polish soldier left Katowice on the fourth day of the war. The factory hands and miners and petits bourgeois, whom I had seen leaving their jobs on the second, were by this time out of the industrial towns; but they returned even before the German occupation took place. The towns were almost untouched by bombs. There was no danger from machine-guns. And the German minority, which had so largely been in touch with the Reich, expected benefits and favours now. They were disappointed by the requisitions, forced sales and bullying which awaited them. According to an eye-witness, writing in the *New Statesman* on March 2nd, their protests that they were *Völkssdeutsche* only

brought the retort that, if so, they should sacrifice themselves for the Führer. On the other hand, for the Poles and Jews expropriation waited. In my work for Czech refugees I had had great help from a Jewish dentist, the president of a relief committee. On the outbreak of war, this man was in Warsaw, and at the time of the invasion his wife was alone in their flat. A few days after the occupation, a German dentist walked in.

'Heil Hitler!' he said. 'I am taking over your husband's practice. You have half-an-hour to leave.'

He commenced work without waiting for her to do so.

Throughout Silesia, I found (on the evidence of reliable friends who escaped) all the Jews, all the Polish men and well-known Polish women, were thrown out of the towns. Their empty houses, shops and businesses were taken over at once. The Germans who replaced them came mostly from Westphalia and other evacuated districts near the Western front.

All known Polish nationalists were arrested; many, my friends believed, had been shot. At all costs, the area incorporated in the Reich has been Germanised. Under this treatment, the Silesians, with their mixed blood, their bad German and worse Polish, their detachment from the rest of Poland, must have quickly taken on a German appearance. That does not mean that they will be a very docile portion of the Third Reich.

The Germans turned out all the Poles who had remained in the direction of heavy industry; this applied even in neutral-owned concerns, such as the Giesecke Company, a subsidiary of the Morgans Anaconda Copper Corporation. They brought in German engineers, wherever possible, to work the mines. Then, before the end of the war, they

restarted production. According to a *Times* report of January 26th, chaos ensued. The new German managements, or 'trustees,' were derived from four sources. One group were business-men from German Upper Silesia; 'Others,' said *The Times*, 'were imported from Danzig, while others again were officials seconded from the Reich. The fourth group were Baltic Germans, who had been induced to leave their businesses in Latvia and Estonia by the promise of good openings in Poznan, Torun or Bydgosz.' The Reich Germans and the Balts were alike ignorant of local conditions, and the latter even of German commercial law and practice. Many had no connections in the wholesale trade, others found their retail market gone with the expulsion of the Poles and Jews. According to Dr. Hayler, chief of the Reich Group for Commerce of the Nazi Party, many of the 'trustees' were, for these and other reasons, quite unsuitable. The Central Trustee Office, under Goering, therefore created 'reconstruction boards,' which looked into the situation. The confusion was not entirely a question of incompetence. Most of the 'trustees' had no means of obtaining credits or loans; though the Balts could make application to the Board of Trustees for Resettlement, whose business it is to finance *Auslandsdeutsche* returning to the Reich. In the end, the reconstruction boards were authorised 'to prevent the establishment of fresh businesses and the re-opening of those which had been temporarily closed.' 'This sentence,' commented *The Times*, 'reveals that the transfer of the regions to German hands has led to a collapse of their economic activity.' To this extent, the Germans got little immediate good of their spoils; but their loot in natural produce was immense. All over the region, the harvest, which had been carefully stored in readiness for war, was removed to Ger-

many. A good portion of livestock certainly went with it. Even before fighting had ceased, the Nazis began to exploit Poland's rich timber-lands.

The greatest sufferers from the occupation have, of course, been the Jews. The majority of Polish Jews have always been a devout and moral people, living a separate life in the ghettos of great cities, or as the sole population of smaller towns. They were most of them very poor, and they faced daily contempt from the Poles, as well as race riots or even pogroms at infrequent intervals. This life drove many of the younger Jews to emigration, as their only chance of a decent existence.

The most unattractive class of Jew was the least abused: the small minority of rich and flamboyant plutocrats, whom one saw in the cafés of Warsaw and the provincial cities. They were too useful as tax prospects to be unduly bothered—so long as they paid. (Unfortunately, it is they chiefly who managed to escape in fast cars, and find sanctuary in Hungary, Roumania or even the United Kingdom). The vast majority of Jews depended on small trade. It was in their hands to such an extent that when, during my own stay in Katowice, an anti-Jewish boycott was organised, it broke down; there were no Christian shops to buy from. Now this trade was annihilated. An eye-witness told me later that every shop-name in Katowice changed overnight.

The story has already been told many times, of how the Jews were packed into trains for Lublin, without more luggage than a bag or rucksack, which they filled with food. On these trains they were taken near to the city. They entered on foot, more and more and more of them, until the city had ten times its pre-war population. With steady generosity, the Lublin Jews did what they could; but the

flood mounted until they went under. Soon there was no place to sleep in the city. Every room was packed with as many as it would hold. There was no trade, for no one had money, or possessions for which money could be obtained. After a time, there was no food. In the streets people walked in a daze of hunger. On the steps people sat, too weak to walk. The poor Christian population was suffering equally; there were scenes which reminded observers of the Russian famine times. The total of suicides mounted daily.

Even here, the courage and tenacity of the Jewish race produced incidents, humorous and touching.

A Swiss journalist was walking down the main street, hungry, having looked everywhere for food. Meeting an elderly Jew, he thought that the man might be able to advise him.

'I wonder if you can tell me, is there anywhere I can get food?' he said.

'Food. No, no, there's nowhere here you can get food,' the Jew answered gravely. Then a smile came to his face. 'But here,' he said, 'I have some *beautiful* foreign stamps. Are you interested?'

Such was the condition of Western Poland in the six months after the war ended. In Lublin, medical opinion expected the outbreak of disease in the Spring, which might spread over Western Europe. In the rest of 'German' Poland, the population was still unsettled, with many thousands of people, who had left their homes during the air raids, endeavouring to return. Those who had been expelled from the towns were existing, it is impossible to know how, in the villages. The movement of population was so great that it enabled many Poles to escape, from whom one's knowledge of this region is derived.

It has been difficult to find out the condition of affairs under the Russians. From the first there were plenty of stories, brought by the refugees who came through into Roumania and Hungary; but these were mostly biassed at source. The refugees were Polish American missionaries, deprived of their districts, British and other businessmen who had lost their businesses, officers and aristocrats anxious to discredit the Soviet régime. On the other hand, there was evidence of a drift of peasantry into German Poland. These might be refugees returning home, or the movement might show something wrong with Russian administration. It was not until January that I was able to find a reliable witness as to all this; a liberal official, a central European, who had remained in Lwów after his colleagues' departure.

My informant noticed no hostility in the city, when the Red Army passed through; but the population watched from the windows and left the streets empty. The troops took three days and four nights to march by. He estimated that over half the men wore the primitive foot-bandage, instead of factory-made boots. Their uniforms were of poor quality. His impression of a shortage of manufactures in the U.S.S.R. was confirmed when soldiers of the garrison were given time off. They had been told not to mix with civilians, but they made use of the shops; and they bought everything in sight. My informant saw a Russian officer, who, finding all else bought up before him, purchased three pairs of corsets—the old-fashioned ladies' variety.

The troops were billeted on the local bourgeoisie. Not from the most biassed refugee did I hear of improper conduct, though there were complaints of the soldiers' greed. But in spite of friction, which was inevitable, and ideology, which made their hosts seem enemies, the Russian soldiers

did not behave in the way almost traditional with armies of occupation. Nor is there evidence of the shooting of capitalists or land-owners, though this was a district of big estates. It would seem, however, that some of these people were imprisoned (though only for a few days), perhaps on suspicion of political intrigue.

The only people actively persecuted were the Ukrainian nationalists. My liberal friend interviewed one of these, who had been deported to the interior of Russia, and who had returned in disguise. This man said that all his leaders had been arrested by the end of December. He believed many of them had been shot, as soon as they were away from their own districts. Notwithstanding their fear of execution or exile to Siberia, he said, the Ukrainians had already organised an underground anti-Soviet movement, which the Russians had not succeeded in rooting out. Many Poles who, until the Russian occupation, had been the Ukrainian bitter enemies were working with them now. Their aim was to organise public opinion, and presumably later to take stronger measures against the Soviet Government of their country. The Ukrainian peasants expected to benefit by the more enlightened nationalities policy of the Soviets; their economic position could hardly be made much worse, and might be improved. Their political leaders, on the other hand, had denounced the Poles in the name of Ukrainian independence, and were prepared to do the same to the Russians.

Measures of socialisation were taken at once, it seems, by the Soviet authorities. The jewellers' shops were sealed (before the troops had an opportunity of visiting them) and the proprietors were informed that their valuables were now the property of the Soviets. Chemists were also taken over

by the state, the assistants being kept on at a reduced salary. In both cases, the owners were expropriated and were not employed. The bakers, on the other hand, whose establishments were also nationalised, were allowed to remain as salaried managers. Restaurants were taken over one by one, while the two main hotels, the George and the Europejski, were commandeered at short notice for Russian officers. The banks remained closed; and much distress and confusion were caused, when, on December 22nd, the Rouble was announced sole legal tender, replacing the Zloty finally.

Meanwhile, Soviet officials had been making a census of living-quarters. Lwów had been the chief refugee-centre, and its population had risen from three to nine hundred thousand during the war. The people were living, for the most part, in dreadfully overcrowded rooms. In order to deal with this situation, the inspectors measured the cubic content of flats, and those who monopolised more than ten cubic yards per person were required to surrender it. (A similar measure was taken in Prague, immediately after the last war, by a left-wing government, at its wits' end to house the population.) Beds and bedding, supernumerary to their owners' requirements, were also removed. In addition, the Soviet inspectors examined the clothes possessed by the bourgeoisie. Anyone having more than one suit, in good condition, and a normal amount of underclothes, was ordered to hand them over, for the use of those less fortunate. All objects of intrinsic value, pictures, trinkets and so on, were confiscated. No appeals were heard against these proceedings; the penalty for resistance or evasion was imprisonment.

The main problem was the organisation of industrial

production and of the food-supply. The industrial undertakings of South-Eastern Poland, unlike those of Silesia, had been damaged during the war. There was thus some excuse for the slower start made by the Russians than by the Germans. All the same, it is curious that, up to the end of January, only two trains of petrol had left the refineries; this suggests that inefficiency and confusion were considerable. The war had created an even worse problem in the supply of fuel and food. With its population trebled, less produce sent in from the countryside, business disorganized and production at a standstill, Lwów was in a desperate position before ever the Russians came. As a result of their efforts, food, which was almost unobtainable, seems to have become adequate; but the shortage of fuel continued throughout the winter.

Finally, there was the problem of the countryside. Here no control at all was established; there was no local police authority, save in a few places where Polish officials were able to carry on. The same disorganisation which had left the towns short of food continued to leave the peasants short of manufactured articles. Moreover, large numbers of people, who had become homeless by reason of the war, wandered the roads with little money, looking for somewhere to settle. They were less affected by the shortage of food, for they were able, in the depths of the country, to obtain meals in exchange for such rarities as a box of matches. The only activity undertaken by the Soviet officials, at first, was taking stock of beasts and acreage, in preparation for collectivisation of the land. This naturally alarmed the richer peasant-farmers, who protested to the American missionaries that they would sooner have an acre of their own to produce on than all the benefits of the collective farm. My liberal official, talking to the peasants of this class, found the same

discontent and depression. The peasants told him that they expected to be poorer than before.

From all these factors was produced the drift to German Poland of which I spoke earlier. It was checked by a very efficient obstacle; the food shortage there. So the wanderers returned. The Soviet officials appear to have realised that peasant-opinion was in part turning against them. Their wireless-propaganda campaign was turned on full blast in the towns and villages. The railway was got into working order by December, to facilitate the bringing-in of produce, and the countryfolk (unlike the townspeople) were allowed to travel about the country freely. The churches had been permitted to remain open, and now notices proclaiming freedom of worship were posted—with the amusing rider that presumably young people would not wish to make use of it.

The most obscure question, in Russian Poland, is the presence of German soldiers. Officially, there is a small detachment of Reichswehr, sent in connection with the transfer of the German minority back to the Reich. The property of these people is being carefully inventoried by staffs of German valuers, with a view to the presentation of a large bill for compensation to the Russians. Against this version, it is claimed that there were sent at first two and then four divisions. These troops, this account goes on, have occupied the important railway line that runs from the north of Roumania to Lwów, then across Southern Poland to Cracow, and thence to Katowice and into the Old Reich. They are supposed to be in military, though not civil, control of the area between the railway line and the frontier—the Carpathian mountains. If this is the case, Russia is cut off from the Hungarian frontier, and Germany has acquired,

in effect, a common frontier with Roumania. This disposition would safeguard the Germans' oil-supplies, and also give them control of the passes into Hungarian Ruthenia.

If such an arrangement has in fact been made, one must suppose that Stalin's preoccupation with Finland has enabled the Germans to force a concession in the South.

XIII

OUTSIDE POLAND

How much better off have the Poles been who left Poland, than those who remained?

Two days after my arrival in Bucharest, following my journey from Cernăuți with Greene, I motored northwards again. I found the roads still jammed with Polish army lorries, field guns, private cars, goods trucks and passenger-coaches. Some of the lorries were those in which refugees had fled from Czechoslovakia before. The condition of the refugees had grown worse, in those two days, while I had been lying soft at the Athénée Palace Hotel in Bucharest. Everyone was suffering from heat, dust and exhaustion, and some from hunger as well. There was a week's growth of beard on some of the men's faces. The stream of refugees had begun before the flight of the government, and even before the war, I was told, and it showed no signs of slackening now, for the Russians let refugees pass freely. The Roumanian government had sent thirty-five army waggons to the frontier, fitted with bathing and disinfecting facilities; but there were too many fugitives. All attempts to inspect them with regard to dirt or disease broke down. All attempts to register their entry broke down. They flooded, thirty-five thousand of them, into Roumania.

One must be realistic about these unfortunate people. As a whole, they were not the heroes of the Polish war. Few of them were ever within a hundred miles of the firing-line. Many of the soldiers had only just been mobilised (in that late mobilisation for which Britain was blamed) and they

had learned neither to resist the enemy nor to obey their officers. These officers themselves were often bank managers or insurance clerks, without experience of war and with no notion of how to treat their men. The civilian refugees fell roughly into three classes. There were the rich businessmen, big industrialists, high officials—the darlings of the economic system—who had escaped early, in big cars, with special passes. There were the postal workers, railway supervisors and clerks, and other state employees, who had enjoyed government transport right across Poland. Finally, there were the working-class refugees, artisans, skilled labourers, servants and others. They had fled on foot into Roumania from all over Poland—in many cases fled before the war began. The class least represented was the peasantry. Of the thousands I had seen between Katowice and Łuck, few ever reached Roumania. Behind these thousands were the millions who had stayed on their land, knowing that whoever ruled the country, with any luck they would keep their living; whereas in exile they would become a landless proletariat.

The result of the breakdown in Roumanian organisation was that the Polish troops, who should (according to international law) have been interned, spread over the country. Many of them lived for some days in various towns between Bucharest and the frontier. Cernăuți became a Polish military centre. I heard of it from an eye-witness.

‘One of the pleasantest sights of the war,’ he said, ‘was the way the Cernăuți people behaved. The girls would “adopt” a Polish soldier and take him along, one on each side.’

‘But what did they talk? Had they any language in common?’

'Often not. It didn't seem to matter. One girl would run into a shop and buy bread, or chocolate, or bananas. Then the two would more or less feed him.'

In Bucharest the men, and sometimes the officers, slept in their cars or lorries, in the quiet streets of the suburbs. During the day they bought food with the few Lei they could get for their Zlote, until their supply of money ran out. Meanwhile, the Germans were making diplomatic protests. Neutral Roumania, they spluttered, was allowing the enemies of the Reich to parade about in uniform, and even with arms. They demanded that combatants be interned. The Roumanians became alarmed. Twenty-five thousand foreign troops make awkward guests; particularly when they are part of a defeated army.

'The Polish troops are completely bolshevised,' complained General Marinescu, the Minister of Police. The authorities gathered them in, then sent them off to be interned, with their officers, in twenty-one camps in Wallachia and three in the Dobruja.

'The soldiers are accommodated in old army barracks,' wrote the British official investigators in early November, 'in much the same conditions . . . as the Roumanian soldiers. . . . The barracks are for the most part cold, ill-lighted and overcrowded, with inadequate sanitation, and a sea of mud stretching between the buildings. In every camp there is desperate shortage of clothing, shoes, blankets and palliasses. . . . Almost universally they complain of lice.' In the Dobruja the men also suffered from malaria. But the Polish internment camps, I found, were causing discontent in the Roumanian army. The Roumanian soldiers complained that the Poles were better treated and quartered than themselves.

The entry of the civilians was even more disorganised, because there was no outside pressure to cause their rounding up. They spread over the country, sleeping in their cars or in the open fields, the rich buying food in the villages, the poor begging their way through a poor country. Thousands of them flowed into Bucharest—the instinct of the refugee to reach the capital, which I had seen in Warsaw, in Vienna, in Prague. They flooded into the Legations and Consulates of the allied and neutral powers, as well as into their own. They got drunk and quarrelled with the civil population, just as the Czechs had done in Warsaw. The situation which follows each of the Nazi invasions reproduced itself with nightmare exactitude. In desperation, the Roumanians made a daily allowance of a hundred Lei for adults and fifty for children, to all refugees who would live at one of forty-six centres. They hoped at least to keep them away from the capital and from the frontiers. It was effective. Many families found private quarters. For others, group living arrangements were made by the government, by the Polish refugee committees, or by the Y.M.C.A. The trouble was, as it is always, the breaking of morale. I went with Dermot O'Donovan, the energetic young Y.M.C.A. organiser, to open such a camp. We found a slummy building and wretched people, going over their grievances, quarrelling, all self-respect gone. O'Donovan made a speech at them.

'Poles!' he said. 'You love your country. You want to free her. To do that, you must set an example to your countrymen who are still in Poland. You, in exile, must be better Poles than they. Then Poland will rise again.'

It was florid stuff, but extremely effective.

'What shall we do?' They were on their feet now.

'You must begin here. You must make this a decent place. Here are pails and brushes. The floors must be scrubbed. Outside you will find paint and paint-brushes to do up the walls.'

The people were transformed. I was an old enough refugee worker to see the skill of the manoeuvre; but better was coming. After some hours, the scrubbing and painting were done, and it was time for a meal and rest. With a Celtic flourish, O'Donovan produced Polish travel posters. He tacked them on to the walls, wet paint and all: the Wawel at Cracow, the royal town of Poland; Warsaw, its devastated capital; the port of Gdynia, which the Poles had created against German Danzig, and which in the war had resisted so long. It was daring psychology, but again it worked. After supper he pushed back his chair.

'Now let us sing some Polish songs,' he said.

Among civilian refugees the great problem is always the children. In Bucharest they were fortunate. One of the best-known names in the capital is that of the Princess Caragea. More than half a century ago the Princess was kidnapped, as a tiny child, by the agency of a rival Roumanian family. For ten years or so nothing was heard of her; then her father succeeded in tracing her to an English orphanage. As a grown woman, and a wealthy one, Princess Caragea established one of the best foundling homes in Europe. A new wing was just now being completed. When the Princess heard of the Polish children's plight, she offered to receive them. I found the children in a splendid modern building, with sun-rooms, nurseries, balconies; and washing and cooking facilities as good as any I have seen. One half of the block was divided from the other by a 'secret' door. On one side, the newly arriving children

were washed, de-loused, and put under observation for illnesses they might have developed en route. On the other side, they were settling down as regular residents.

As I went in with the Matron, a scatter of children ran to her skirts, shouting confidences. I talked to several. Then to one, a boy of three or four, I was incautious enough to mention his parents.

'All gone,' he said. He was quite composed.

'Where to?'

'There was a bang. Mummy went like that,' he gestured, 'all in bits. Daddy too.'

It seemed to me that in Roumania everything possible was being done for the Poles. Funds were being raised in England. Money would be forthcoming from America. Less reassuring reports came from Hungary. Thither, not thirty-five but sixty thousand refugees had gone, I heard. O'Donovan was disquieted, and I gathered that in Budapest there was no organiser of his calibre. I had intended to return home and make what I could of my experiences, as a journalist, but there was something more urgent here. Besides, I felt almost a personal obligation. When I had been doing something for the Czech refugees in Poland, Colonel Żoltaszek and his colleagues in Silesia had shown great kindness to them and to me. So I returned to London to make contact with refugee organisations. In early November I was in Paris again, en route for Hungary, on behalf of the Save the Children Fund.

A fresh Polish Government had, I knew, been formed in France, I was not clear how or by whom. I was taken aside by a well-informed neutral friend.

'What are you British thinking of,' he said, 'about the new Government?'

'What about it? I'm not an official, only a journalist. I don't know anything.'

'Well, I understand that the British have taken no part in all this. They have even no representative vis-à-vis the Poles. Sir Howard Kennard is still in London.'

'What has that to do with the formation of the Government?'

'I am told, though it's only a rumour, that the new government has been picked by the French and Americans. A great disadvantage to you.'

'Well, if it's done, it's done, I suppose,' said I.

'Yes, but you still have no representative. Literally the only person of diplomatic rank in contact with the Poles is Mrs. Norton, the wife of the former Counsellor in Warsaw.'

Whatever the truth of this story, I soon realised the complete lack of interest in Poland and the Polish question among British diplomats in Paris. For them it hardly existed. Meanwhile, the Americans were working busily, with close knowledge of the situation and the problems.

The one person concerned with Poland, as I had been told, was Mrs. Norton. She had already raised funds and material in England and France. She had already opened workshops, with the approval of the French; here the exiles were making shoes, clothes, and other things which they had not money to buy. The genius for publicity which once earned Mrs. Norton some thousands a year was bringing in high dividends for the Poles. The main obstacle, amazing in view of her own standing as the wife of a senior diplomat, was the obstruction of officialdom.

Mrs. Norton, I found, was also concerned about Hungary. We arranged that she should come on to meet me in Budapest, bringing truckloads of goods bought in Paris. Again, it

was the Americans, especially those who had been in Poland, who showed the greatest interest in the plight of the refugees.

The Poles in Hungary were in a bad way. A good many thousands had come in, in the third week of September. It was still hot weather then, and they wore summer clothes. The stream had continued, as it did in Roumania, and by this time it had reached the sixty thousand mark. True, only ten thousand were registered as civilians, but it was said that many in the military camps were not soldiers at all. Hungary is a poor country, and she was at that moment struggling to absorb Ruthenia, her spoil from the partition of Czechoslovakia. How could she house the additional mass from Poland, when the Hungarian army itself had not barrack-room? The Germans followed the same bullying policy as with Roumania: the Polish soldiers *must* be interned and fully guarded. As a result, the civilians were sacrificed. Some found their way into private houses, others had friends who would support them in pensions or hotels for a time; but the majority were huddled anyhow into camps scattered over the country. With their own unemployment problem, the Hungarians dared not allow their guests to work for their keep, and although two hundred and twenty thousand pengoes a day were spent on their food, conditions in the camps were appalling.

English and American relief organisations had, after a lot of delay, supplied winter clothing, but there was further delay in distributing supplies from Budapest. I soon found out why. The S.C.F. had as its representatives two excitable, well-meaning Hungarian Jewesses. For many years they had run a school, which was the odd legacy of the Fund's famine work after the last war, and they had acquired much

merit. But now that something active must be done, and the help of the Hungarian authorities obtained, they were less of an asset. Their school tied them to Bucharest, save week-ends, and the anti-Semitic Hungarians disliked working with them. The Quakers' representative was an elderly Englishwoman with high ideals and little knowledge of Central Europe. Her recourse when baffled—a frequent condition—was to tell stories of the work she had done in Spain. I never know why a connection with the Spanish war should authorise a person to bore one to the limit of endurance, but it often seems to do so. The rest of the refugee bodies, Hungarians and Polish, bickered and obstructed and wrangled, while food and supplies stood in the capital, and the refugees in the camps half starved and more than half froze.

We took out a lorry from Budapest, laden with soap, blankets, underclothes and food, and made a tour of the camps. They varied widely. At one extreme was the Franciscan convent at Ludany, where the Mother Superior, a ascetic Magyar beauty, had a warm tenderness for the refugees. Here fifty women slept in well-heated rooms, each with her own bed and locker, and flowers everywhere. Other camps were in spas where it would have been not unpleasant to stay for a week or two, with sufficient books to read. At the other extreme were the disused factory buildings which the Hungarians had been forced to use. Over a hundred people would sleep together in these places, in damp cellars or filthy old machine-rooms. For bedding they would sometimes have palliasses and blankets, but sometimes vermin-ridden straw spread on stone floors. They were cut off from the world, without books, newspapers or radio; suspended in a private misery of cold, dirt and

hunger, and horror-stories told over and over again. It would have been better had they been occupied in some way. They could have busied themselves with washing their clothes and their bodies—if there had been the soap to do it with. One group sang the Polish anthem nightly, to keep up their morale. At a smaller camp the group were trying, en bloc, to return to German Poland. No oppressions, they said, could be as bad as the half-life of a refugee. Others were only prevented from feeling the same by the arrival each day of fresh fugitives from the Nazis. The contrasting type of refugee, terrified of recapture, was disturbed by the nearness of his camp to the Slovak frontier. If Germany should invade Hungary next, what then? I had seen this anxiety before—among refugees awaiting, in Vienna or Katowice, the long-hoped-for British visa—and I knew its demoralising effect.

With these factors at work, it only needed the combination of a poor commandant and bad food for camp-mutinies to break out. I heard of such a mutiny at Losonc and drove there to investigate. The police had been called in and the place was quiet again, but the men were still out of hand; there was a near-riot when my lorry was unloaded. The men were largely postal and railway personnel from Silesia. State employees were always the most difficult refugees. At the same camp were sixty children, all suffering from lack of milk and good food. Many of them had crossed Slovakia on foot. Many, like the small boy in Bucharest, had seen their parents killed. One woman had walked over the Tatra mountains with four small children and produced a fifth on her arrival in Hungary. The children in all the camps were nervous, under-nourished, intractable.

How contradictory British policy was, I reflected. We had

bound ourselves not to make peace without consulting the Polish Government, which implied re-establishing Poland in some form. These exiles were not the flower of Poland, but they were the people who would have to take the lead in rebuilding her out of chaos. Yet we were letting them rot and demoralise here, without spending a penny to help them. We were destroying the very thing we were supposed to be fighting for. And yet, was I interested in those refugees as Poles? In Silesia, working for Czechs, I had been afraid I might inadvertently send stateless refugees of Polish birth to England; in Hungary, working for Poles, I was afraid I might spend money intended for them on Czechoslovakians. How ludicrous.

I remembered a conversation with an eminent British M.P.

‘Why do you think it’s your duty not to help stateless Poles?’ he had asked me.

‘Because the money has been subscribed and the visas granted for refugees from Czechoslovakia,’ I answered, self-righteously.

‘What does that matter? I tell you that I, as an M.P., have often testified that people were Czechs whom I knew to be stateless Poles. I have no right *not* to lie, when I know that a life depends on it.’

Remembering, I realised that I had always been wrong; I had only been afraid of the anger of London committees.

That anger I was in any case to experience now. My commission from the Save the Children Fund had been to observe the conditions of Polish refugees in Hungary. The Authorities of the Fund became restless, then indignant. What had really been wanted was a full Report, to consider at their leisure. Moreover, my activity disturbed their

regular representatives by causing the Hungarian authorities to regard me, and not them, as the Fund's emissary. Loyalty demanded that the good ladies' dignity be not detracted from, whatever might happen to refugees. But if I had offended my own committee, Mrs. Norton offended the rest. Arriving with her trucks of supplies, she took over distribution at once. Her own material and that lying in Budapest began to reach the camps from now on. It is due to her that conditions now differ from those described above. Her pounding energy could not be held by etiquette, and she offended every committee by putting the welfare of camps above *their* dignities. Presently, in spite of her standing, it was hinted that Mrs. Norton might care to take an interest in refugees elsewhere.

My work with the Polish refugees having ended, I thought I should like to see how the more distinguished exiles were bearing themselves.

Although Moszicki was Pilsudski's friend and successor, one thinks of Beck as the Napoleon of the fallen government. It was he who, climbing first on Hitler's shoulders and then stepping on to those of Mr. Chamberlain, gave Poland a diplomatic position she had never possessed. It was he against whom the students in Warsaw were shouting 'away with Von Beck' in April; who was the chief butt of German press-attacks in May; and who flourished the Anglo-Polish pact, in June, in the face of the Nazis. With the President and Smigly-Rydz, he formed the triumvirate which governed Poland and was responsible for the dangerous game she played. Incidentally it was the extremely close relationship between him and Smigly-Rydz which was responsible for the fact that he was not available to the Diplomatic Corps during the first few days of the war. All the Diplomats in Warsaw

were furious that they could see him with such difficulty, and for so short a time. The reason was that Smigly would not let Beck out of his sight, and Beck seems really to have believed that it was in the best interests of the state that he should stay and hold Smigly's hand. Smigly could not and would not take a decision alone, even though he was in charge of the army and Beck was only the Foreign Minister. Beck seems during those early days to have kept his head better than anyone else. I wondered what he was thinking now, on his St. Helena at Braşov, where the Roumanian authorities were confining him in his hotel. So I travelled on to Roumania again to see.

The Aero-Palace at Braşov is the last word in Roumanian *modernique*: yellow, angular, with huge windows; its floors, walls and furniture are so shiny that one seems in continual danger of skidding. In the foyer, which is like a luxurious fish-tank, Madame Beck came to me.

'I am so sorry that my husband is not yet back from Bucharest,' she said. 'He has been calling on Monsieur Gafencu to find out how soon we can leave this—place.' She made a little movement with her hand, and I thought how much the queen in exile she was. My eye told me that she had made her black dress herself, and knitted its green collar and cuffs, but she was as tiny and as poised as when she entertained so well in Warsaw.

'But we are expecting him back this afternoon,' she went on, 'are we not, Count Lubensky?' She turned to the tall secretary. Count Lubensky was looking out of the window.

'Certainly, Madame. His Excellency has announced that he will be here shortly after lunch.'

'Ah, then, Miss Hollingworth, perhaps you will give us

the pleasure of your company at lunch to-day. Then you can speak to my husband when he arrives.'

Just then I was pushed roughly on one side.

'Now then, Madame Beck, upstairs please. You know you're not permitted to stay in the foyer. If you want to talk you must talk in your room.'

The tone was so brutal that I stared. I recognised the hotel porter, whom I already knew as one of the local Germans and a Nazi agent. So the organisation could reach out even here, to harass its beaten enemies.

'You will excuse us. Till lunch-time then.' Madame Beck withdrew.

Before lunch I noticed newspaper headlines announcing the loss of important documents by Colonel Beck. I wondered about the hotel porter.

At lunch I was introduced to Count Roman, former professor, former diplomat, former Minister of Commerce, and a personal friend of Beck. He and his wife took first place in the little court which the Becks had drawn round them at Braşov. Half-a-dozen others were there, as well as Count Lubensky, who looked out of the window. The door opened, and a tall girl came in, very young, with loose fair ringlets.

'May I introduce my daughter?' said Madame Beck.

Before lunch she drew me aside.

'I wanted to speak to you about this foolish rumour that my husband has lost documents. It is quite false. He has no such documents here.'

We sat down to lunch. It was a curious little party, at three tables. All active politicians, diplomats, civil servants, their chief topic was the number of days and weeks they had been confined, and the likelihood of release.

'It is quite unjustifiable,' said Count Roman. 'We are no longer members of the Polish government. We are individual refugees. There is no reason in international law which prevents our leaving Roumania.'

Count Lubensky alone, it seemed, had been allowed to travel to Budapest, but had returned to his chief's entourage. He subsequently went to Paris, from which he could not get back to Roumania.

If any of the group went into the town, a policeman followed. They complained that few of their letters reached their destination, and that telegrams and letters sent to them were not delivered. I felt the atmosphere in that well-varnished hotel as close as a prison.

'At least we have the comfort of knowing one bit of Poland untaken,' said Count Roman. I looked an inquiry.

'Our Polish ships. My children,' added the ex-Minister of Commerce, pulling out a photograph of his youngest son, with some idea of illustrating his analogy.

'They are like the last strip of Belgian soil, which remained untaken until the Germans were driven out. It will be so again.'

These Poles in exile were what they had been in power: heroic, romantic, slightly ridiculous; but I reminded myself that romantic nationalism had won Poland its existence after more than a century of foreign domination.

Both Colonel Beck and Count Roman, I learned, had had tempting offers to form a Polish protectorate under German suzerainty. They had refused.

After lunch, in Colonel Beck's room, we sat on the beds and chatted.

'Don't believe this story about stolen documents,' said

Count Roman. 'We have no valuable documents here, and none have been stolen.'

Count Lubensky looked out of the window. Presently he turned.

'His Excellency is arriving,' he said.

A few minutes later Colonel Beck was in the room. I thought at once how tired and ill he looked, and how much older than when I had last seen him, in the period before the war. From his expression I could see that his departure was no nearer. Colonel Beck greeted everyone briefly, and turned to answer my questions.

Any journalist knows that there are times when the great do not wish to be interviewed. This was one. Apart from reiterating that he was in possession of no documents, or alternatively that the documents had not been stolen, he had little to say. He gave me the impression of a man angry, frustrated and pre-occupied. In his years of power, Colonel Beck had habitually interviewed daily a score of people, all of them proficient in politics or journalism, all of them stimulating to his own keen intelligence. But in exile, his position and his daily occupation gone, he was grievously attacked by insomnia. He would retire to bed, read for a few hours, then beg some member of his household to wake and talk with him.

Colonel Beck, in a way, represents the Poland which faced the war. There is a larger, vaguer, more permanent Poland which lies behind that. If there is anyone who represents that, it is the Colonel's friend and supporter, Mademoiselle Illaková, Foreign Office official, poet, biographer, and secretary of the late Marshal Pilsudski. So I went on further into Transylvania to see her, at the house of the Royal Resident in Cluj. As I came in, Mademoiselle Illaková was

sitting by the window of the Resident's long salon. It is a well-proportioned modern room, with a collection of dark, rather beautiful paintings by Roumanian contemporaries, arranged like a frieze in identical metal frames. A lovely room; and still I thought how much an exile Illaková looked in it. Her long face, with its heavy bones, has the formed look of women who have made things with their imagination and intellect. Yet there is an enduring kindness. It is the face of an organiser, a Christian and an artist.

'Everyone has been kind to me,' said Mademoiselle Illaková. 'But I can't stay here. I must go back to Poland. For me, it is impossible to remain permanently away.'

'What about the dominant powers, Mademoiselle Illaková?' I said. 'You wouldn't wish to be under Russian rule?'

'I don't care what rule I'm under. It is all the same to me if it is communist or not. I have nothing to lose. And it is Poland.'

'You hope for some reconstruction of the Polish state before the war ends?'

'The Germans have promised something. I don't know how much it means. But if they will do anything, and I can go there, I shall do so.'

Polish patriotism has a special meaning. It is not the preservation of free institutions and personal liberty, as it is to an Englishman, a Frenchman or an American. It is not the power of the state, as it is to a German, or perhaps an Italian. It is not a social system and an ideology, as it is to a Russian. It is simply the Existence of Poland.

'You hope nothing from the Allies?' I asked.

Illaková was tactful. She was considerate. Nothing to

the discredit of Britain or France was said. Nevertheless, she betrayed the conviction that Poland had been made a pawn, had been given promises which could not be implemented, and sacrificed in a bluffing political game. She thought the re-establishment of her country an obligation on the Allies; but she had relatively little faith in their prospects of fulfilment.

I inquired as to the intelligentsia and culture of Poland—of which she was an ornament—in this unlucky period.

‘I don’t want to talk about the intellectuals,’ she said. ‘I am too disillusioned just now. Such selfishness. Such heartlessness. People taking possessions in cars and leaving human beings. Caring nothing for their country, only for themselves.’

‘But surely they had to escape, Mademoiselle?’

‘Why escape? There was no need. Before one of the Foreign Office staff crossed the frontier, we discussed it. I wished to remain in Poland. But they pressed me. I am an official, I must obey loyally.’

‘You do not believe in carrying on Polish culture in exile?’

‘It must be carried on. But it cannot develop without roots in its own soil. Each people has its own nature and its own means of expression. My Roumanian hosts are liberal, cultured, generous. All the same, we never quite understand one another.’

I was curious as to Illaková’s view of Colonel Beck and his policy. She had been, she said, of the party which had supported the rapprochement with Germany, long before the period of tension or the Anglo-Polish pact. I gathered that she blamed the anti-German ‘patriots’ for the failure of this policy almost as much as the Nazis themselves. She

was on the whole a pacifist, on Christian grounds, and her point of view was only confirmed by the war. The Polish-German rapprochement, to her, had been the likely means of keeping the peace between the nations of Central Europe. Now a general war had started, and where would it end?

XIV

CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR

1. *The effect upon South-Eastern Europe*

It was interesting to observe the effect of the defeat of Poland upon the state of mind of the small countries of South-Eastern Europe. I can only make their reactions clear by putting in a word of explanation about their situation since the Paris settlement.

Greece, Yugoslavia and Roumania had obtained, as the result of the last war, such increases of territory as to bring within their frontiers practically the whole of their respective peoples. They were therefore satisfied, and only anxious to retain what they held. Turkey, on the other hand, had lost much territory; but her losses were of non-Turkish countries, mainly inhabited by Arabs and by Christian Europeans. She had at the same time abandoned the desire to maintain a supra-national Ottoman Empire, in favour of organising simply a Turkish national State, so this diminution of her territories did not make her revisionist. Once the question of the Narrow Straits had been disposed of at the Montreux Conference, and Turkey's one-sided disarmament had been terminated, she took rank as a satisfied Power. It was far otherwise with Bulgaria and Hungary, both of which fared badly in the Paris settlement. Bulgaria nursed no less than three grievances, in regard to Macedonia, the Dobruja, and the Aegean Outlet. Hungary had been cast down from a high place among the nations to the rank of a third-class state; large Hungarian populations had been torn from her and placed under the rule of Czechoslovakia, Roumania and

Yugoslavia. With them went still larger numbers of Slovaks, Ruthenians, Roumanians, Serbs, Croats, whom the Hungarians had been attempting to Magyarise. Thus, Hungary and Bulgaria were dissatisfied, revisionist Powers.

Such was the situation before Munich, when Czechoslovakia, Roumania, Yugoslavia were united in an alliance, the Little Entente, designed to check the revisionism of Hungary; and Yugoslavia, Roumania, Greece and Turkey had formed another grouping, for the purpose of preventing similar demands on the part of Bulgaria. At Munich, however, Czechoslovakia was rendered helpless; subsequently the Hungarians were awarded a share of the spoils. The predominantly Hungarian regions of Slovakia and Ruthenia, with a bit more for good measure, were returned to Hungary; and at the time of the 'Einmarsch,' in March 1939, Hungary got the rest of Ruthenia. Thus, on her northern side, Hungary was almost satisfied—not entirely, because she really desired the return of the whole of Slovakia; but for the moment she had secured what she regarded as necessary. The consequence is that Hungarian statesmen are at present making anti-revisionistic noises against the Czechs and the Slovaks; while soft-peddalling (under Italian influence) their claims against their other two neighbours.

Another event of the spring of 1939 affected the balance of forces in the Balkans. The Italian occupation of Albania on April 7th transformed this small country from a semi-vassal state, in which the Yugoslavs could, at a pinch, exercise some countervailing influence, into a definite Italian colony. The Axis Powers thus greatly increased their encirclement of Yugoslavia.

The Little Entente had collapsed by the destruction of its strongest member. The efforts of the Balkan Entente

statesmen to do a deal with Bulgaria, on the basis of shelving her revisionist claims, had failed. The League of Nations was plainly no longer reliable, since Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain and Czechoslovakia had in turn gone down before aggression. Russia in the north-east, Germany in the north west, Italy in the west, were all suspected of aggressive designs. France was friendly, but unreliable (as her failure to honour her alliance with Czechoslovakia in 1938 quite plainly showed) and Great Britain appeared to take remarkably little interest in Eastern Europe. The Balkan statesmen could only hurry from capital to capital, collecting promises which they knew were valueless, buying a respite with economic agreements. It seemed better to 'go quietly,' and to pay in metals and foodstuffs for unwanted aspirins, useless blocked Reichsmarks, and postponement, for a time, of the threat of German invasion.

One of the most exposed States in this region was Hungary. The satisfaction of her revisionist ambitions in the north did not in any way make possible an independent attitude with regard to Germany; indeed, the Germans apparently expected gratitude for the Vienna award to be expressed in the form of subservience to German requirements in the realms of commerce, foreign policy and internal policy. With the Germans on their Austrian frontier, and also in military occupation of Slovakia, and their capital only a short distance from Vienna, there was nothing for it but to watch and pray.

'Why ever don't you put some kind of defences on your frontiers?' I asked a high official in Budapest, in July.

'*Defences!* Do you suppose we want the Germans to march in to-morrow?'

'What else can you do?'

'Do? We can't do anything, between ourselves. But we have very close relations with Rome, you know.' (His voice was a little strained.) 'Italy will stand by us.'

'As she stood by Austria!' I thought.

The internal situation was also slightly precarious. The Hungarian Nazi party was increasing; it had fifty-six members in the Parliament. At the same time, the Government was afraid of what it called a 'Communist' rising.

Meanwhile, Greece and Roumania received the British guarantee, and Turkey made a treaty with Great Britain and France. I found my Yugoslav and Bulgarian friends envious; they had no guarantee, nor could they easily be reached, should it be necessary for the Western Powers to come to their assistance. All over the Balkans the fear of war and the strain of re-armament was depressing the already low standard of living of the millions of peasants. So they waited: Hungary face to face with her great neighbour; Yugoslavia encircled; Roumania threatened by a German invasion through Hungary, or a possible Russian attack upon the province of Bessarabia; Greece and Turkey feeling more comfortable, because of the British fleet, yet still exposed to a possible attack by land, driving down towards Salonika and Istanbul. The only substantial precaution that could be taken was that which the Yugoslav Government effected in August, just before the beginning of the war: the Serbs came to terms with the Croats, and the dangerous feud inside the Yugoslav kingdom was substantially healed.

Then, like a display of lightning, the electrical three weeks flashed over Europe. The Germans overran Poland, and the Russians seized their share of the spoils. The situation was transformed.

The most noticeable effect of the Polish War was the shock

that it gave to confidence in the efficacy of a British guarantee. Poland might or might not recover her independence after a few years of war in the west; but the British had not been able to save her from complete disaster.

‘What did the Anglo-Polish Pact mean?’ asked a Roumanian Major, the day after I left Poland. ‘Was it only a bluff?’

‘Certainly not,’ I replied, with none too good a conscience. ‘We have declared war, as we promised.’

‘That has not helped the Poles much.’ The Major was evidently thinking of the prospects of his own country.

‘What more could we do?’ I asked.

‘Ah! That was your statesmen’s affair, when they made the Pact. Their promise induced the Poles to stand up to the Nazis; now that war has come, you have not been able to implement it. Is this Britain’s word?’

The Major might well be worried. On September 19th the Government of President Moscicki left Poland, to be succeeded by a Government-in-exile at Angers. On the afternoon of the 20th, Armand Calinescu, Prime Minister of Roumania, was assassinated in Bucarest by members of the Iron Guard. He had been a well-known Anglophil, and a friend of Sir Reginald Hoare, the British Minister.

The Roumanians were for several days in a panic. They expected at once an Iron Guard rising and a German invasion. Although the German Press accused the British of organising the murder, there was little doubt that it had been procured by German money. Meanwhile, the Polish refugees were telling everybody of the invincibility of the dreaded German war-machine.

Fortunately, King Carol knew how to handle a crisis provoked by terrorists. A few months earlier, the Germans

had promoted Iron Guard disturbances while the King was on a visit to England. A story is told of his conversation with Hitler, on his way home. It is said that the German Chancellor fulminated for some time about the manner in which Carol ought to govern his State. At last the King replied coldly:

'Your Excellency forgets that *I* am the King of Roumania.'

'Your Majesty King of Roumania?' shouted Hitler. 'Why, you can't even keep order. At this very moment your country is in revolution!'

'Your Excellency is misinformed. The Iron Guard leaders were shot this morning.'

After the murder of Calinescu, the King struck again. Members of the Iron Guard in the prisons were executed. There were stories, possibly untrue, of the torture of prisoners. More arrests and executions followed. The police were authorised to shoot on sight any known Guardists, and to leave their bodies lying at the cross-roads, as a warning to all comers against sedition.

Events outside Roumania temporarily removed the danger of simultaneous Guardist revolt and German invasion. Ribbentrop went to Moscow, where he was received with the contempt due to an ally of expediency only. He was given a banquet, and seated between two People's Commissars, both of them Jews, and opposite the Minister of the Czechoslovak Republic—still at that date recognised by the Soviets in its pre-Munich frontiers. However, Ribbentrop and Molotov arranged for the division of Poland between their two countries. The Russian army spread along the Soviet-Roumanian frontier, and a barrier was interposed between Roumania and the German army.

As the German danger abated, fear of Russia took its place. The province of Bessarabia has several times changed hands, being ceded by Roumania to Russia in 1878 and lost by Russia to Roumania in 1918. Russia has never formally acknowledged this transfer, though she has not yet advanced revisionistic claims. Both countries fortified their Bessarabian frontiers, and there were constant rumours of Russian troop concentrations. Now that the Russian-occupied territory was advanced along the northern border, the danger threatened also the Bukovina, a former Austrian province with large German, Jewish and Ukrainian minorities. Nervousness and rumour reached the point that Derek Patmore, the correspondent of a British news agency, actually telegraphed the news that Russia had invaded Roumania. This alarm ended in the blushes of Patmore and the protestations of the Roumanian Government that they desired only neutrality.

The same desire for neutrality had from the first possessed Yugoslavia. There is much public sympathy for the Allies, particularly for France. A French lady, driving in the country, collided with a peasant. He was not much hurt, but she offered him compensation. He insisted that the sum she offered him was excessive; but when he discovered that she was French, he declined to accept any money at all, and cried 'Vive la France'—a cry which was taken up by the bystanders. A gendarme then arrived to take notes of the accident, but he too, on being informed of the driver's nationality, saluted, put away his note-book, and waved her on. She departed amid cheers.

Unfortunately, sympathy with our cause is not sufficient justification for statesmen who might think of espousing it. They have to consider the position of their country. Yugo-

slavia has, just in time, accommodated the majority of the Croats with a sort of 'Ausgleich' reminiscent of that of 1867 in the Habsburg Empire. But there are large German minorities, particularly in Slovenia and in the 'Banat'; there are Hungarian minorities throughout the north of the country. The Germans would like to acquire Slovenia, the Hungarians the Voivodina, the Italians Dalmatia, the Bulgarians Macedonia. Italy has a common frontier with Yugoslavia north of the Adriatic, and another (newly acquired) in the south-west, by reason of her occupation of Albania. Bulgaria might or might not be tempted to join in any general attack on Yugoslavia.

The agreement with the Croats, concluded in August, just before the outbreak of war, was little to the taste of the Germans. At once they began to spend money upon Yugoslav politics, using as their tool the irreconcilable Croat extremists. These people, having for years intrigued with Italy, and having openly rejoiced at the assassination of King Alexander in 1934, now resented the benefits of Croat autonomy having fallen to the Croat Peasant Party of Máček. They themselves were professional politicians and urban agitators. They were now in close contact with Nazi Germany, but at pains to deny this fact.

I interviewed one of their leaders, Mr. Vilder, in January 1940.

'I assure you,' he said, 'that I am most unpopular with Germany. It is for this reason that I cannot become a member of the Government.'

'Then why, Mr. Vilder, does your paper, *Nova Rijec*, attack the Allies and support Germany?'

'Ah! Our foreign policy may be neutral, but our consciences cannot be.'

'And your policy for Yugoslavia?'

'An united country. Not simply a strong Croatia, which is all that the Croat Peasant Party is interested in. Then, an alliance with Bulgaria and Turkey. But we must always remain on good terms with the totalitarian Powers.'

If the advance of Germany appeared to the Balkan Powers to be the greatest menace, it was otherwise in Hungary. At this juncture, when the Russians had appeared upon the Ruthenian frontier—that common frontier with Poland, for which the Hungarians had so persuasively argued—the 'Bolshevik' danger caused even greater alarm. The frontier itself, running along the high mountain ridge of the Carpathians, was a sieve for Communist agents; they could not be kept out, nor could the Hungarian Government, for all the anger of its officials, take any effective steps. Wisely, it invited the Soviets to re-open their Legation in Budapest, closed since Hungary adhered to the Anti-Comintern Pact.

Hungary has a large minority of Germans, small minorities of Serbs, Croats and Roumanians, a newly-acquired minority of Slovaks and of Ruthenians, and an indigenous Fascist organisation. Moreover, she has not yet progressed very far with a land reform to satisfy her peasants. She might well fear that either German or Russian agents, or both, would cause serious disaffection. Hungary had not taken much trouble to appease her minorities, so, at this juncture, her Foreign Minister announced the willingness of his Government to make new minority agreements; but although he made this move at the end of September, as late as March 1940 nothing had come of it. Count Czaky made a speech on September 15th, in which he sought to balance between two points of view by praising Hitler and Mussolini for 'their efforts to keep the European peace,' and simultane-

ously expressing sympathy for 'the heroic struggle' of Hungary's old friends, the Poles.

Even in this delicate situation, the irresponsible Hungarians could not keep out of trouble. They took advantage of Roumania's embarrassment to concentrate troops upon the Roumanian frontier, and to stir up trouble among the Hungarians of Transylvania. King Carol acted with firmness. He answered troops with troops, and one began to hear of 'Carol's Dyke,' a vast tank-trap along the Transylvanian frontier. At the same time, he secretly arrested over a hundred of the more dangerous of the Transylvanian Hungarians. The Yugoslavs endeavoured to exercise a calming influence between their two neighbours, and in the New Year the crisis once more passed over.

Budapest has continued to be its gay, theatrical self; but the atmosphere is one of false gaiety before the falling of the axe. None pretends to know whether the blow will fall from the west or from the north, or whether the Hungarians will march into Transylvania with the Germans at their heels. The staff of the British Legation (hearing that their colleagues from Poland have not yet received compensation for the loss of their personal property) occupy themselves with plans for the removal of their effects.

The impact of the war upon the countries further from Germany and Poland has not been so direct. In Bulgaria, influences already at work have been intensified. On the one hand, Soviet Russia enjoys great influence with the peasants, as has been the case ever since the murder of Stambuliski, the peasant Premier, in 1923. The sentiment of Slav brotherhood is always present in the consciousness of the Bulgarians; but it is a friendship of peoples, frowned upon by the Bulgarian Government. The peasants have a

strongly developed political consciousness, and, with the advance of the Russians into Poland and the Baltic States, their feelings can no longer be discounted by the authorities. Russian trade delegations, cultural representatives (no doubt other representatives as well) have been arriving in Sofia. Russia appears to be the Power of the future.

Germany attempts to counteract this sentiment. About two-thirds of Bulgaria's trade in either direction is done with Germany—a commercial liaison, as a Bulgarian economist pointed out, without parallel anywhere in the world, except in the tying of Mexican trade to the United States. Since the outbreak of war, the Germans have increased their efforts; while Britain has made little observable attempt to challenge Germany, or to save her falling prestige; unless one counts a lecture-tour by Lord Lloyd!

The fundamental problem of the Balkans, although intensified by the invasion and conquest of Poland, remains what it has always been, ever since the ebbing of the Turkish invasion. The people of the peninsula want their countries for themselves. As Gladstone put it: 'The Balkans for the Balkan peoples.' But the Great Powers cannot let the Balkans alone. Russia, Germany, Italy, pursue their ambitions; Britain and France try half-heartedly to counteract them. The Balkan Peninsula is the largest unexploited market in Europe, and all the industrial nations of the West desire to sell there their manufactured goods. Germany's drive for power in the Balkans is in part an outcome of the wish for export markets; but even more a desire to control a valuable source of primary products. With Germany the old slogan is reversed: the flag follows trade. Germany's victory in Poland has greatly strengthened her hand, for she has gained in strategic position and in prestige. Her eyes are already

turned beyond the confines of Europe, to lands her road to which lies through the small countries of the south-east. Her prestige is only rivalled by that of Russia; for the Soviets also had their will of Poland, but without the necessity of fighting for it. Even those who hate Russia, fear her. The power politician must needs respect a policy so successful, and take Russia into account in his calculations.

2. The Future of Poland

Gradually it has begun to seem that when Poland flared into war and then died down so soon, nothing was left of the Republic but a heap of ashes. Unless the present conflict spreads and the U.S.S.R. is involved, there is little chance that the Eastern Provinces will be released from Russian rule, to form part of a Polish state in the future. Democratic Western Europe is hardly likely to make war on Russia for the purpose of putting Ukrainians and White Russians once more under Polish rule. The loss of the Eastern Provinces is recognised as final by all but the most chauvinistic of the exiled Poles. Although, on the other hand, no Pole considers giving up a square kilometre of the land siezed by the Germans, the questions remain: what is to be done with the territory of Poland, once it is freed? Can the Polish Republic be re-established?

Recent reports suggest that the Nazis are having more success in Poland than in Bohemia and Moravia. By transfer of populations, by systematic persecution, by careful weeding out and execution of Polish intellectuals and leading patriots, they are doing far more to blot out the Polish nation than they have been able to accomplish by similar methods in Czechoslovakia. It may well be that, at the end of the war, there will be little left in liberated Poland upon

which a national State can be built. Meanwhile, the exiles are decaying in the internment camps, and will be in no case to form an élite fit to lead a national renaissance. Finally, the group of men around the exiled Government has shown its incapacity by splitting into rival factions; no supporter of Colonel Beck is employed by that Government; none has contributed to the Polish White Book on the outbreak of the war, and in that volume the part played by Beck is minimised. By another jealous intrigue, the official report of the Polish Governor in Danzig was suppressed, and for it was substituted the memorandum of a man who had spent no more than ten days in the city. I was privileged to read a few pages of the memorandum submitted to Mr. Sumner Welles, and I saw here another kind of ineptitude. It was written in wretched English, and the best comment upon its matter was the question put by a puzzled member of Mr. Welles's suite: 'Whatever,' he asked, 'are "the Poles' immemorial homes"?' (The places referred to were, as a matter of fact, Russian.) In a word, it is not unfair to say that the representatives of the exiled Poles are losing credit as fast as those of the Czechs are gaining it.

In view of these facts, some of the more realistic Poles are beginning to wonder whether it will be possible to re-create, even in their genuine 'immemorial homes,' a fully sovereign and independent state.

'No,' answered one of the Polish diplomats, now working in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at Angers. 'We should only make the same mistakes over again. Our national characteristics are unchangeable, at least for several generations. They make it impossible for us to rule so difficult a country, situated there, between Germany and Russia.'

'Then what do you propose?' I asked him.

'We must find some new form of government. Something which will make a reality of our independence, and yet give us security.' I sympathised. No-one can know Central Europe without realising that the nation-state is an anomaly in that region. The states whose frontiers were fixed at Versailles were not satisfactory. Looked at from the points of view of economic interdependence, political influence and military security, they were too small. Yet they were far too big to provide for self-determination—down to the smallest unit—which is necessary to avoid minority problems in a region of such mixed nationalities. In Poland, it was absurd that Silesia, with its strong local feeling and part-Germanic culture, should be ruled by a clique of Poles from Galicia; it was absurd that the Ukraine should be governed by Poles from Warsaw. No less awkwardly, on the other hand, the German-Polish frontier cut in two the single economic unit of Silesia; the factories of the Teschen district were torn from Czechoslovakia, to which they were of importance, and added to the already top-heavy industrial structure of Poland. Under the system of sovereign states no sound solution either way could be achieved.

The answer to the difficulty might be found in some form of local cantons, self-governing, but related to a federal centre. The federation, in its turn, would have to cover an area much larger than any of the recently-existing states, or than the homeland of any one nationality. Yet, knowing the deep-rooted antipathies of Central and Eastern Europe—for example that between the Czechs and Poles—I find it difficult to envisage a solution of this kind. Nor is that the only qualification to be made. Politically, Silesia *did* enjoy autonomy in regard to its administration and the power to tax, although authority rested in the hands of Galician

Poles. Economically, it *did* form part of a free-trading area, the Republic of Poland, though this area was still smaller than the unit dictated by a rational economy. Nevertheless, with all its advantages as something not unlike a 'federal canton,' Silesia had twelve thousand unemployed. Autonomy did *not* sustain the falling standard of living of the peasants. It did *not* prevent the provincial economy (along with the national) from moving backwards. Poland will not only need inclusion in a larger group of countries and require a maturer hand in its government. It calls for a completely new economic basis.

It would be good to think that this might be achieved. Then the torture of the Polish people through these days would be given some retrospective meaning, instead of remaining merely another senseless tragedy of power-politics.